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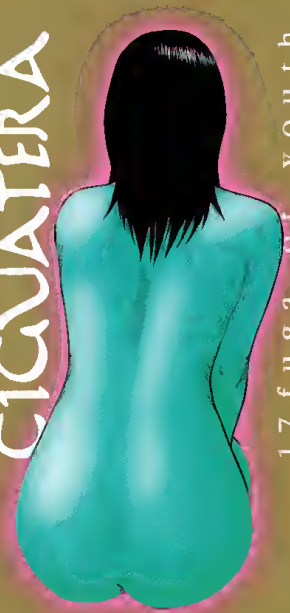

CIGUATERA

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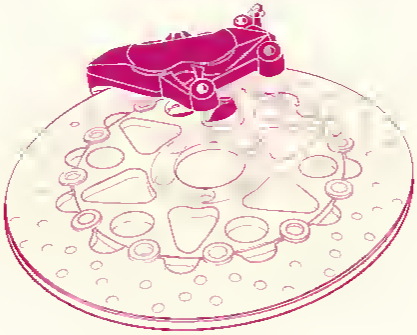
FURUYA



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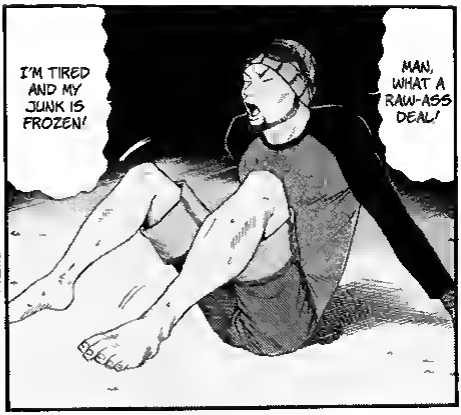
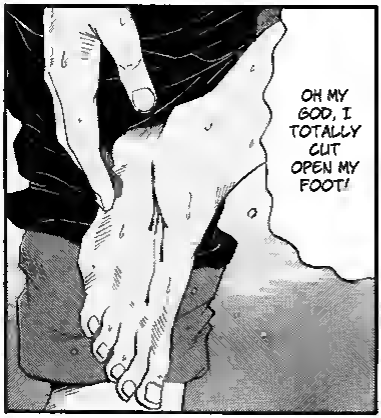
Chapter 58: Unordinary

FUCK THIS!
NOPE!
DID YOU FIND IT?
ジャポ

OWWW!


I'M TIRED AND MY JUNK IS FROZEN!
MAN, WHAT A RAW-ASS DEAL!


OH MY GOD, I TOTALLY CUT OPEN MY FOOT!

AAGH, WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?
WHAT HAPPENED? DID YOU STEP ON SOMETHING?

DO YOU HAVE ANY BAND-AIDS, AKIKO?
NOPE, SORRY I'M NOT SO GOOD WHEN IT COMES TO THAT GIRLY STUFF.
WELL, WHY DON'T YOU RUN ALONG AND BUY SOME, THEN? LOOK AT POOR OGI BOY!

AND WHILE YOU'RE AT IT, GET COFFEE FOR EVERYONE AND SMOKES FOR ME
FUCK YOU! BUY THEM YOUR-SELF!

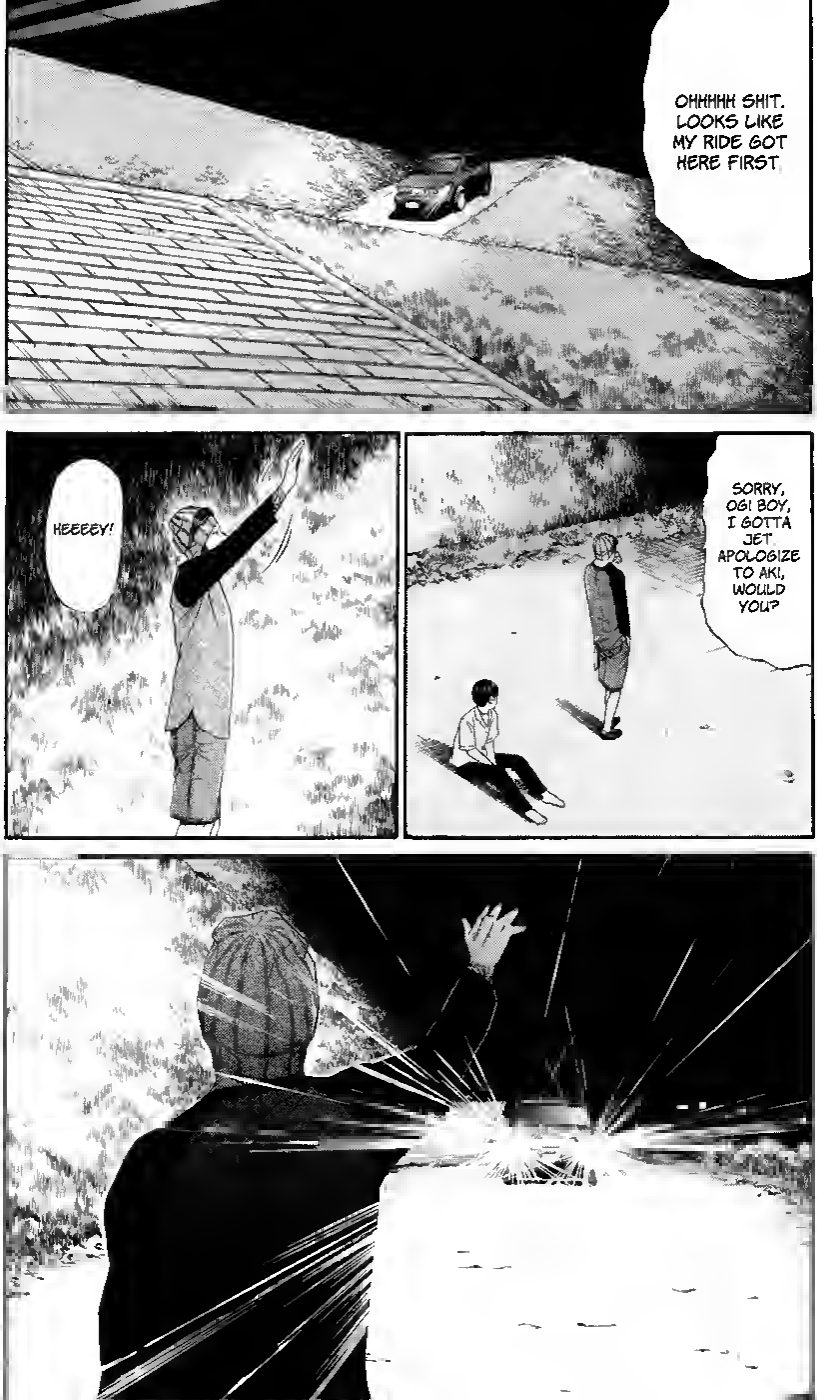
HEY, WE'RE IN THIS GODDAMN MESS BECAUSE YOU THREW MINE OUT! JUST GO GET SOME!
THERE AREN'T EVEN ANY STORES AROUND HERE! WHERE WOULD I GO?!
GO BACK TO THE TRAIN STA-TION! GO ON, RUN!!
I WANT TO GO HOME ...

AND YOU'RE GONNA BRING BACK SOME DISINFEC-TANT AND SHIT TOO, RIGHT? I KNEW YOU WERE KIND AT HEART, BABE!
SHUT THE FUCK UP!

...
TAKE A SEAT.
WHAT'S UP, KID?
IT'S A BEAUTIFUL SIGHT.
WELL, LOOKIT ALL THEM STARS.

YOU GOT A JOB YET, OGI BOY?
I'M TRYING TO GET INTO A REGULAR OLD COLLEGE..
IS THERE A COLLEGE FOR PEOPLE LIKE THAT?
REALLY? I THOUGHT YOU WERE DUMBER THAN ME
..I'M GONNA GO TO COLLEGE ..
UMM, TECHNICALLY...
YOU FUCKIN' HER WITH THAT FRENCH ROLL COCK YOU'RE PACKING DOWN THERE?
SO, HOW'S THE OTHER STUFF GOING? HOW'S IT WITH THE FLY GIRLFRIEND?
.YEP..
AHHHH YOU MUST REALLY BE WORKIN' YOUR ASS OFF, THEN

SHE MUST GET HIT ON A LOT, Y'KNOW? GOTTA BE CAREFUL, SON
IZZAT SO... GOSH, IT MAKES ME JEALOUS
UMM...
WELL...
YEAH...
YOU CAN SLAP A BAND-AID ON IT AND THEN GET GOING
C'MON, AT LEAST WAIT UNTIL AKI GETS BACK. SHE RAN OFF FOR YOUR SAKE
I THINK I'M JUST GONNA HEAD BACK, ALL RIGHT?
UMM, MY FOOT'S PRETTY MUCH STOPPED BLEEDING, SO...
KUH?
YOU CAN GO ON DATES AROUND TOWN WITHOUT FEAR.
AND THEN WE'LL PROBABLY NEVER SEE EACH OTHER AGAIN.

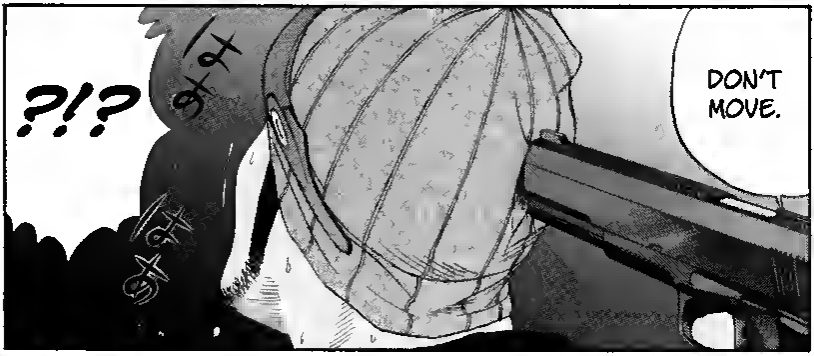

OHHHHH SHIT. LOOKS LIKE MY RIDE GOT HERE FIRST.
HEEEEY!
SORRY, OGI BOY, I GOTTA JET. APOLOGIZE TO AKI, WOULD YOU?

RUN FOR IT, OGI BOY !!!
WHAT ?!!
I'M SERI-OUS!! RUN!!
FORGET THE SHOES, JUST GET OVER THE HILL!!!
WHAT ?!!
WHAT ?!!

I CAN'T GET UP THERE IN BARE FEET!
WH- WHAT'S GOING ON?!
C'MON! STRAIGHT UP THE HILL!
AAAAAAAAAAAAAH!!!

AAA-
AGH!
GOT 'IM!
HNGG!
TSK
!!
NNHG
!!

GAAH
!!!

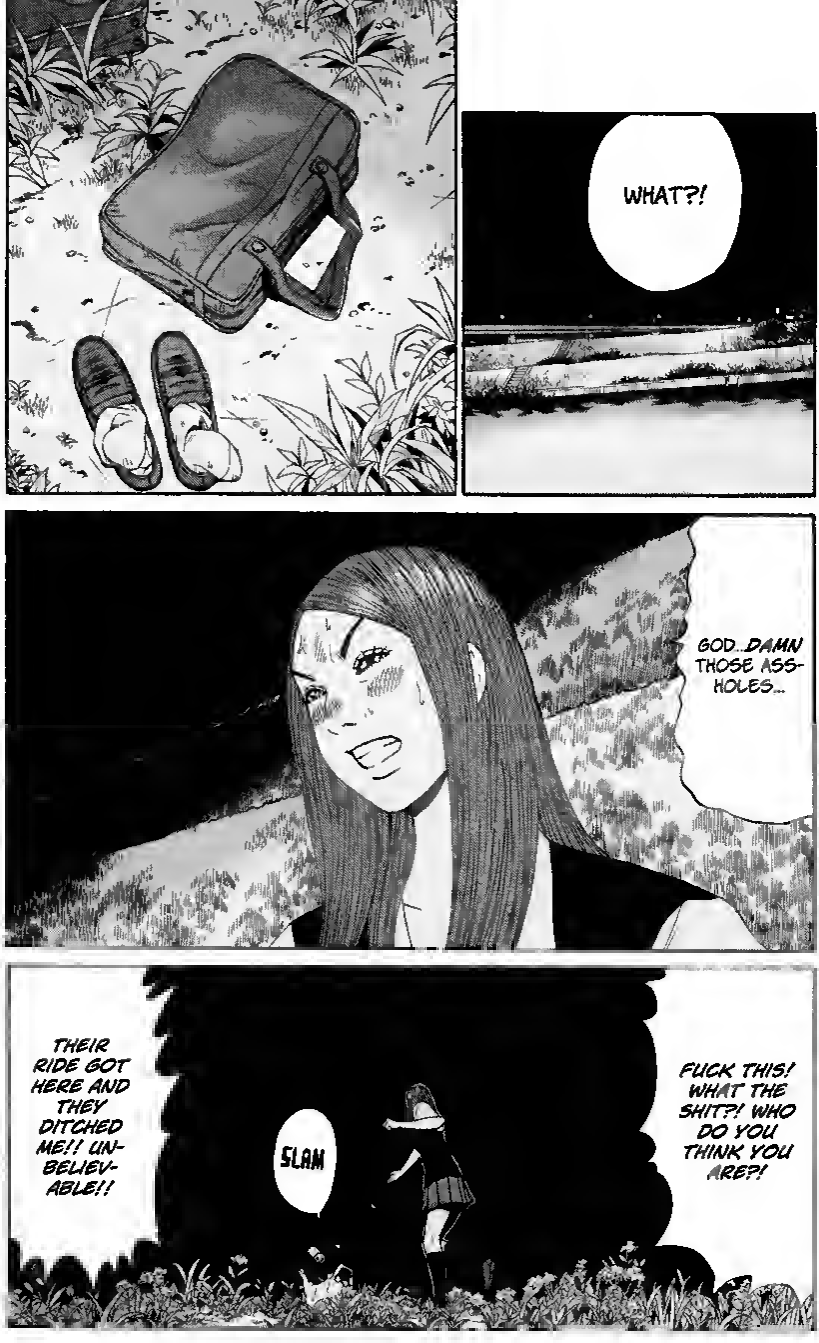

?!?
DON'T
MOVE.

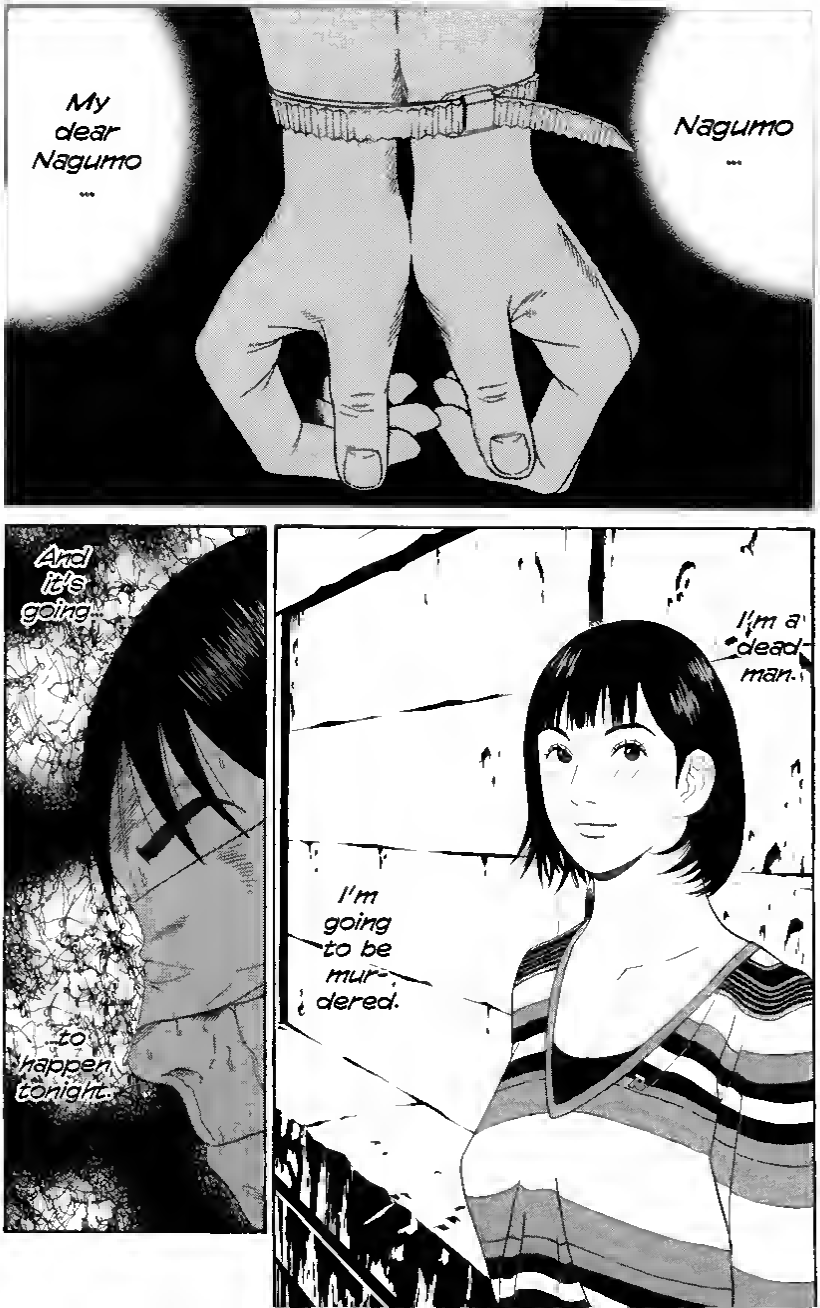
NICE
AND EASY,
NOW. NOT
A MOVE
OR YOU'RE
DEAD.

YEAH, HIM TOO!
WHAT ABOUT THIS ONE OVER HERE?
YOU OKAY, KIBA? C'MERE AND TRUSS THIS GUY'S HANDS AND FEET UP.

WE GOT SOMETHING REAL IMPOR TANT TO DISCUSS
GET IN THE CAR, TANI-WAKI.

SLAM
SLAM


WHAT?!
GOD...DAMN THOSE ASS-HOLES...
THEIR RIDE GOT HERE AND THEY DITCHED ME!! UN-BELIEV-ABLE!!
SLAM
FUCK THIS! WHAT THE SHIT?! WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?!


My dear Nagumo ...
Nagumo ...
And it's going...
to happen tonight.
I'm going to be mur-dered.
I'm a dead-man.

I'll never get to ride my bike again...
I'll probably never see you again...

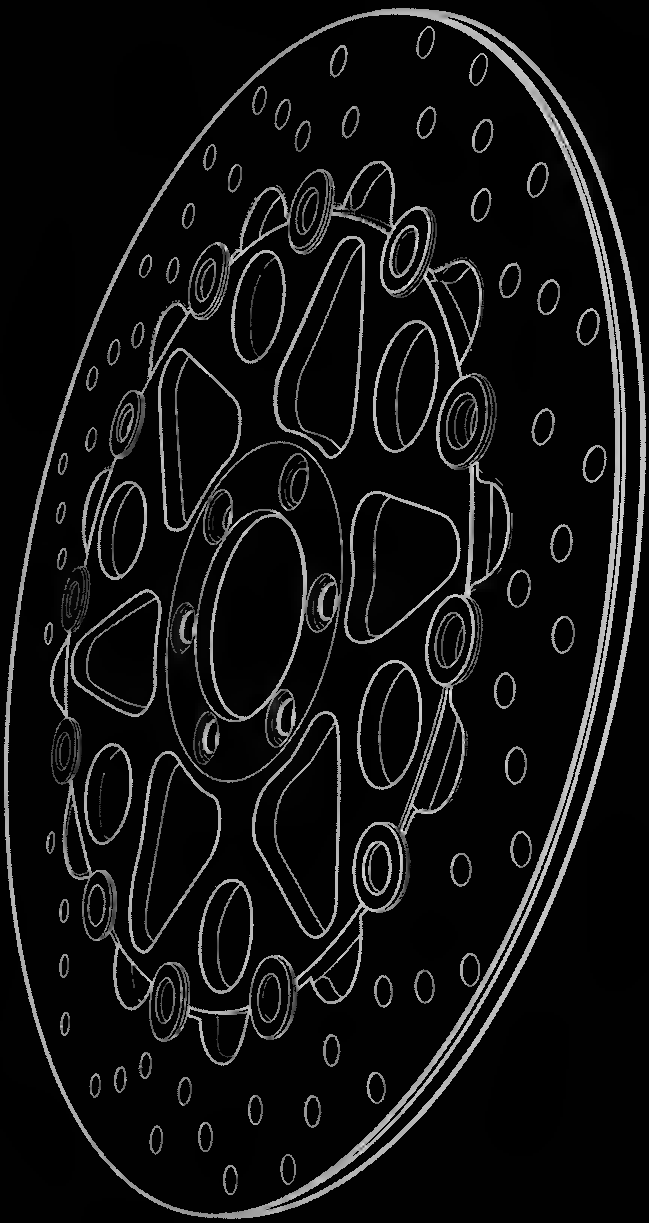
and now I'm going to die next to him.
I'm only here because I was stuck with this idiot.

WHERE'S KUNIMURA?
OKAY, TANIWAKI.

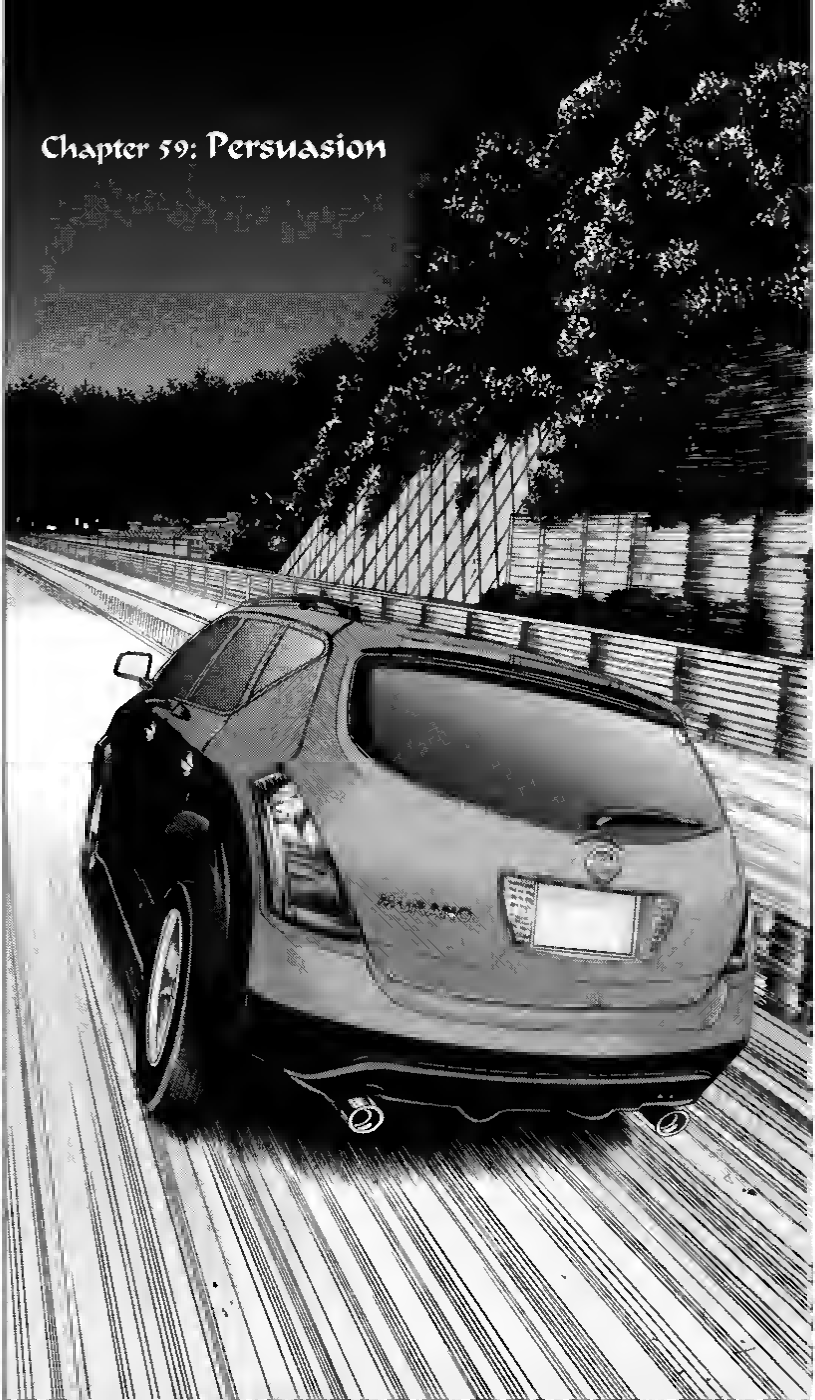
ALL HE'S GOT LEFT IS YOU AND THAT NIIDA GUY.
C'MON, MAN... THERE'S NOTHIN' TO BE GAINED BY STICKIN' WITH THE OLD MAN NO MORE. YOU KNOW THAT!

...I DUNNO.

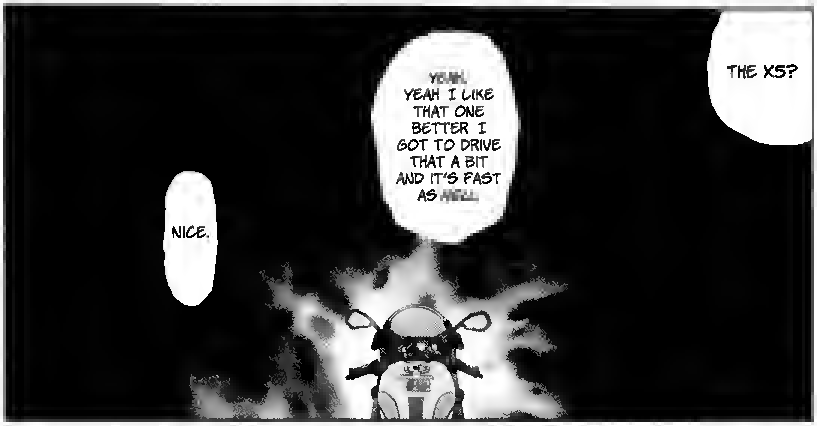
HE'S DEAD.
WHAT ABOUT MR. KURODA?
'COURSE, HE WAS PRACTICALLY LIKE A SON TO KUNIMURA, SO IT DOESN'T SURPRISE ME THAT HE'D BE READY TO DIE WITH HIM...
WE SPENT LOTS OF TIME TRYIN' TO GET HIM TO SEE THE LIGHT, BUT HE JUST WOULDN'T LISTEN TO US.
YOU MIGHT WANNA CONSIDER DOING THE SAME...IF YOU DON'T WANT YOUR FRIEND THERE TO WIND UP IN A WORLD OF TROUBLE.
EVERYONE ELSE ASIDE FROM KURODA BOUGHT THE STORY. IN FACT, THEY WERE PRETTY HAPPY ABOUT IT, IF YOU ASK ME...



Chapter 59: Persuasion



THIS IS A NICE CAR AIN'T IT? REAL SNUG ON THE GROUND FOR BEING SO TALL.
WHAT'S THAT OTHER ONE CALLED? THE BMW THAT'S LIKE


THE X5?
YEAH. YEAH I LIKE THAT ONE BETTER I GOT TO DRIVE THAT A BIT AND IT'S FAST AS
NICE.

WHAT'S UP NOW, MR KURA? WE GONNA GET SOMETHING TO EAT?
YEAH. THAT SOUNDS GOOD TO ME EVEN RICE BALLS WILL WORK.
LET'S DO THAT THEN.
YESSIR.

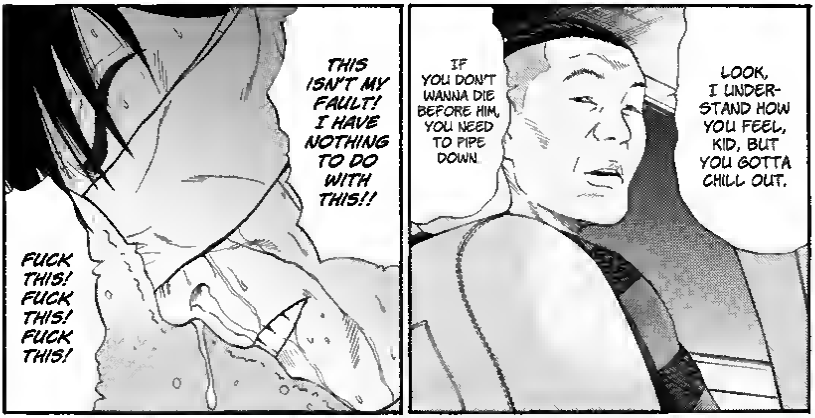
YOU GOT ANY REQUESTS? ANYTHING YOU'RE IN THE MOOD FOR RIGHT NOW?
NAH, JUST GET ME WHATEVER
IF THEY GOT LIKE A CORN DOG OR SOMETHING, I'LL HAVE THAT
AWW-RIGHT!

...
...TANIWAKI.

YEAH?
WHAT HAPPENED TO THOSE EARS OF YOURS, MAN?
WHY ARE THEY MISSING?

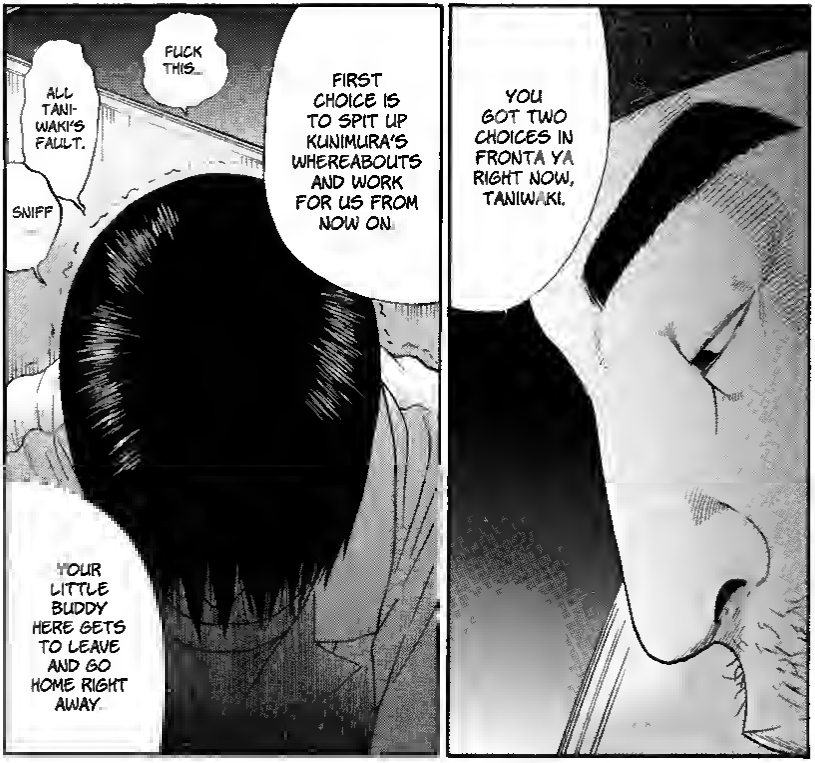
I...I...
FINE, FUCKIN' FORGET IT YOU'RE A REAL WISE-ASS, AREN'T YOU?
I WAS TAKING MY BLESSINGS AND I FORGOT TO GET MY EARS COVERED
HEH HEH
I CAN'T TAKE THIS! I DON'T WANNA DIE WITH THIS ASSHOLE!! LET ME GO!! FUCK THAT GUY!!
I'VE... I'VE GOT NOTHING TO DO WITH TANIWAKI! I HAVE NO RELATION TO HIM! GET ME OUTTA HERE!!
HATE TO SAY IT, BUT HE'S GOT YOUR LIFE IN HIS HANDS AT THE MOMENT.
SORRY KID, BUT THAT DEPENDS ENTIRELY ON TANIWAKI RIGHT NOW

LEAVE THIS TO ME, OGI BOY. YOU DON'T GOTTA PLEAD FOR YOUR LIFE YET.
SHUT UP! SHUT THE FUCK UP!! I'M NOT GONNA DIE NEXT TO YOU!! WHY CAN'T YOU JUST CUT THIS BULLSHIT OUT FOR ONCE IN YOUR LIFE?!!

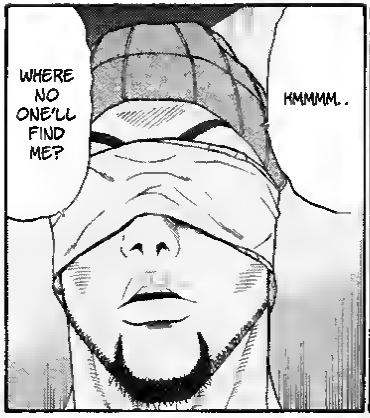

LOOK, I UNDER-STAND HOW YOU FEEL, KID, BUT YOU GOTTA CHILL OUT.
IF YOU DON'T WANNA DIE BEFORE HIM, YOU NEED TO PIPE DOWN
THIS ISN'T MY FAULT! I HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS!!
FUCK THIS! FUCK THIS! FUCK THIS!

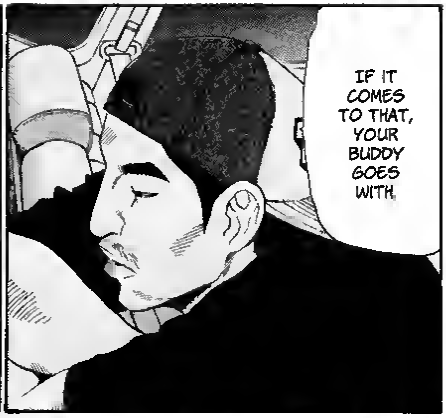
YOU'RE A LITTLE GODDAMN PRICK, YOU KNOW THAT? YOU WERE OUT THERE SEARCH-ING FOR THE GUN WITH HIM, WEREN'T YOU? WHICH MEANS YOU DO HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH IT.
IF YOU'D FOUND THAT GUN, ONE OF US MIGHTA BEEN SHOT BY NOW, SEE?

ALL RIGHT, PEOPLE. LET'S GET DOWN TO BRASS TACKS.


FUCK THIS...
ALL TANI-WAKI'S FAULT.
SNIFF
FIRST CHOICE IS TO SPIT UP KUNIMURA'S WHEREABOUTS AND WORK FOR US FROM NOW ON.
YOUR LITTLE BUDDY HERE GETS TO LEAVE AND GO HOME RIGHT AWAY.
YOU GOT TWO CHOICES IN FRONTA YA RIGHT NOW, TANIWAKI.

YOUR OTHER CHOICE IS TO DIE AND GET DUMPED WHERE NO ONE'LL EVER FIND YA.


HMMMM..
WHERE NO ONE'LL FIND ME?

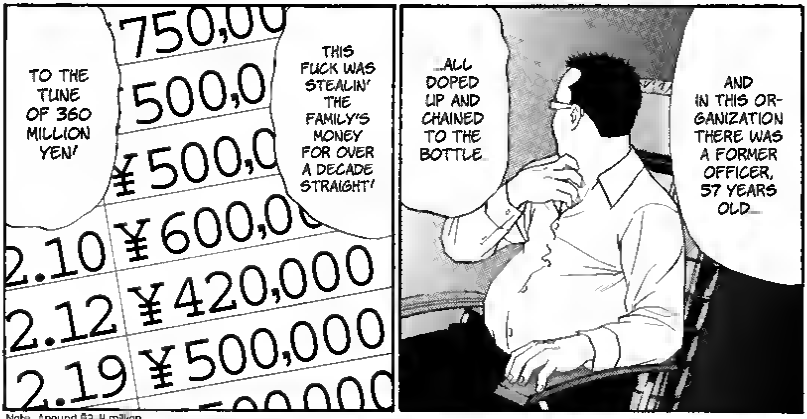

IF IT COMES TO THAT, YOUR BUDDY GOES WITH.

YOU GET TO MAKE YOUR CHOICE NOW. WHAT'LL IT BE?

IF HE DIES, LET'S DUMP HIM IN THE WATER I CAN'T STAND BUGS.
I'LL RUN

WHO IS THAT?
YOU KEEP MENTIONING THIS, UH. KUNIMURA GUY.
WHAT'S THAT?
UMMM, CAN I SUMMON UP THE COURAGE TO ASK ONE THING?
HUH ?!!
I'M SERIOUS I JUST THOUGHT I SHOULD ASK, IF I WAS GONNA DIE OVER THIS...
ANSWER THE QUES-TION!
WHAT? YOU THINK THIS IS SOME KINDA JOKE?
GODDAMN! THIS GUY'S A STRAIGHT FUCKIN' RETARD!!
NO SHIT?! ARE YOU SERIOUS? AND YOU WERE GONNA KILL SOMEONE OVER THAT?!
UHH...I'VE JUST BEEN FOLLOWIN' WHAT MR. KURODA TELLS ME TO DO...
ARE YOU FUCKING WITH ME?! YOU SERIOUSLY DON'T HAVE A SINGLE CLUE WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT ?!!

LOOK, YOU NEED AN EXPLANATION?! YOU AND US, WE'RE TECHNICALLY ON THE SAME SIDE!!
WE'RE BROTHERS IN THE SAME YAKUZA ORGANIZATION, SEE?! WE'RE WORKIN' FOR THE SAME GOALS!!


AND IN THIS ORGANIZATION THERE WAS A FORMER OFFICER, 57 YEARS OLD...
...ALL DOPED UP AND CHAINED TO THE BOTTLE
THIS FUCK WAS STEALIN' THE FAMILY'S MONEY FOR OVER A DECADE STRAIGHT!
TO THE TUNE OF 360 MILLION YEN!
2.10 ¥600,0
2.12 ¥420,000
2.19 ¥500,000

Note: Around $3.4 million

NORMALLY, YOU'D BE KILLED AND THAT'S THE END OF IT, BUT THIS GUY WAS STILL A FORMER MEMBER OF THE GANG HE GOT OFF JUST BEIN' EXILED
LUCKY MAN!!

IS YOU!!
THAT OLD MAN IS KUNIMURA, AND ONE OF HIS FIVE MEN...
HE'S GOT NO MONEY OR WEAPONS, JUST FIVE GUYS UNDER HIM.
BUT SURPRISE SURPRISE, THE OLD MAN FLIPS OUT AND TRIES TO DESTROY THE FAMILY

FOR REAL !!!
FOR REAL ?!!
THICKPACK

NOPE! HE'S OUR BOSS! THE LEADER OF THE ENTIRE NATION-WIDE KAWAI SYNDI-CATE!!
WHAT?!! SO HE WASN'T A BIG-SHOT FROM SOME ENEMY GROUP?!
AND THE MAN YOU TRIED TO KILL TONIGHT WAS THE HEAD OF THE ORGA-NIZATION!!

SORRY, GUYS. I GUESS. I'D PREFER THE CHOICE WITH NO DYING.
WHOAAAAA.. CRAZY. OKAY, I GOT IT...

HELLO? THIS IS KIBA.
SNIFF SNIFF
CALL IN AND SEE IF THEY FOUND NIIDA.
SHNRRT

WHAT DO WE DO?
MAN, THIS POOR SHITHEAD REALLY HAS NO IDEA.

MY LIFE HAS BEEN SHIT EVER SINCE I MET YOU!!
I DON'T... EVER WANNA SEE YOU AGAIN! THIS IS ALL YOUR FAULT!!

WHEWWW... SORRY ABOUT THIS, OSI BOY. LOOKS LIKE WE'RE OUTTA TROUBLE.

Huh?
YOU BROUGHT IN TAKAI, TAKAI BROUGHT IN THAT CRAZY BASTARD, I LOST MY EARS, AND THIS WAS THE ONLY LINE OF WORK I COULD FIND.
OH, ARE WE GONNA PLAY THAT GAME? 'CAUSE I'VE BEEN THROUGH SOME UNBELIEVABLE BULLSHIT BECAUSE OF YOU.

YOU'RE NOTHING BUT TROUBLE... ANYONE WHO BOTHERS WITH YOU IS BOUND TO GO THROUGH HELL.
YOU'RE A FUCKING PESTILENCE AND YOU OUGHT TO BE DEAD.. DON'T EVER TALK TO ME AGAIN.

Huh?

then put me in a taxi back to the river...
They asked me for my address and other info.

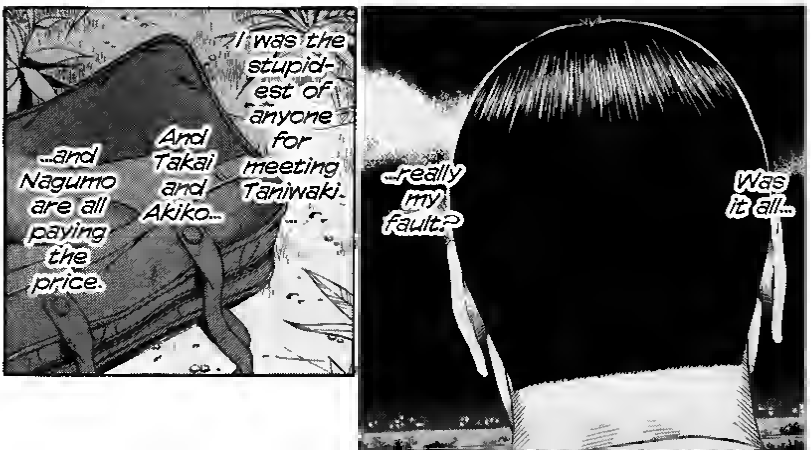
I THINK.
YOU'RE GONNA DRIVE. CAN YOU DO THAT?
Taniwaki left with them to do his first bit of work, disposing of a body...

Oh yeah...
My phone got busted.

...but I didn't.
I thought I was gonna die tonight...

I GOTTA STUDY.
IT'S OKAY NOW.

So was it all...

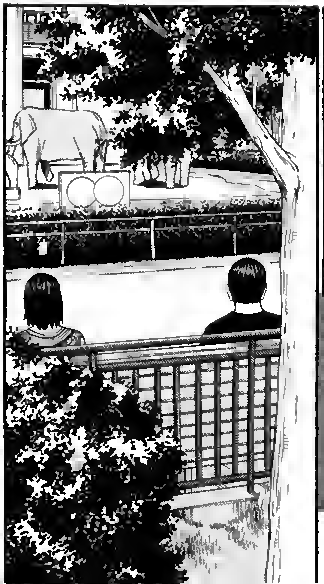

...and Nagumo are all paying the price.
And Takai and Akiko...
I was the stupidest of anyone for meeting Taniwaki...
...really my fault?
Was it all...

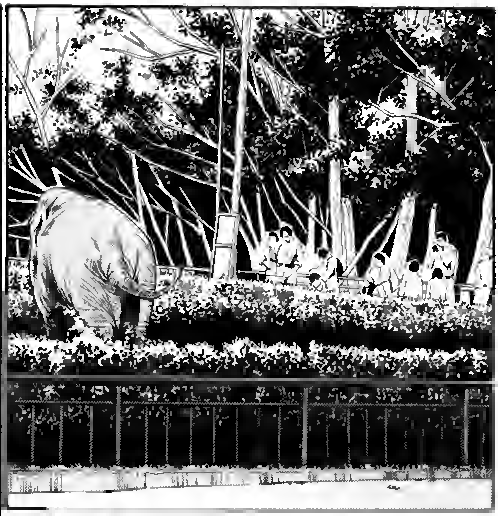
It finally hap-pened...
I finally heard it.
...from the person I wanted to hear it from least...
...that I was most afraid of hear-ing...
The one thing deep down...

WHAT HAPPENED LAST NIGHT?
HUH?
I CALLED YOUR PHONE AND YOU DIDN'T ANSWER, AND YOU DIDN'T GET HOME UNTIL WAY LATE
AND TODAY YOU'RE CLEARLY REALLY UPSET ABOUT SOME-THING.

I THINK YOU'D BE SURPRISED HOW MUCH BETTER YOU'LL FEEL
I WISH YOU'D JUST TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED. I HATE IT WHEN IT FEELS LIKE WE'RE AT A FUNERAL...
DOES IT HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH THAT TANIWAKI GUY?
...
NAGUMO...
YES?
I'M ONLY GOING TO MAKE YOU MISER-ABLE...

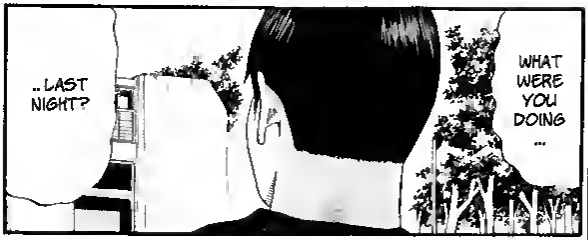
Chapter 60: Exam Students





WHY ARE YOU GOING TO MAKE ME MISERABLE?
SO? DO YOU FEEL LIKE TALKING ABOUT IT YET?

STILL CAN'T SAY?
...

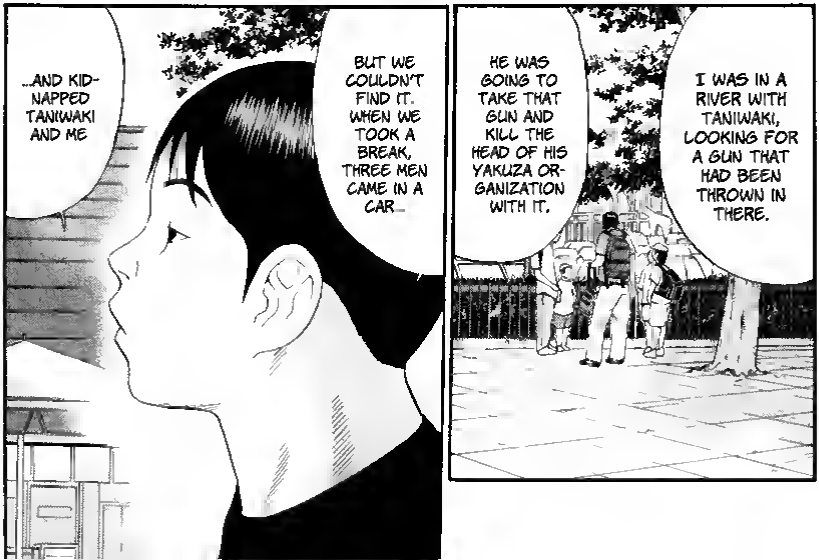

..LAST NIGHT?
WHAT WERE YOU DOING ...

NAGUMO
YES?

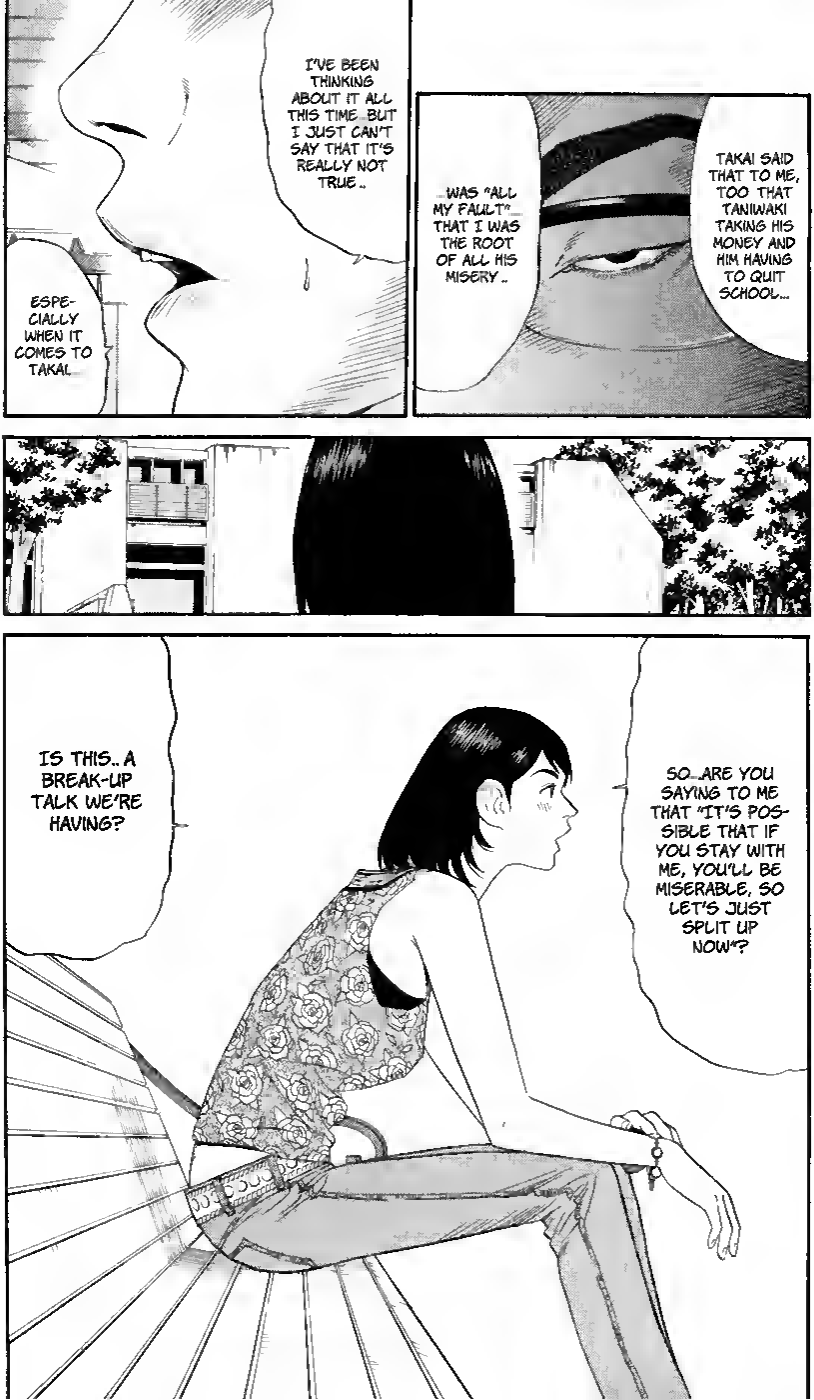
THEN TAJIMA POPPED IN. WE GOT DINNER AND WATCHED A MOVIE...
LET'S SEE, YESTERDAY I WENT HOME AFTER WORK...

...LAST NIGHT...I WAS KIDNAPPED BY YAKUZA...
AND WAS NEARLY KILLED.

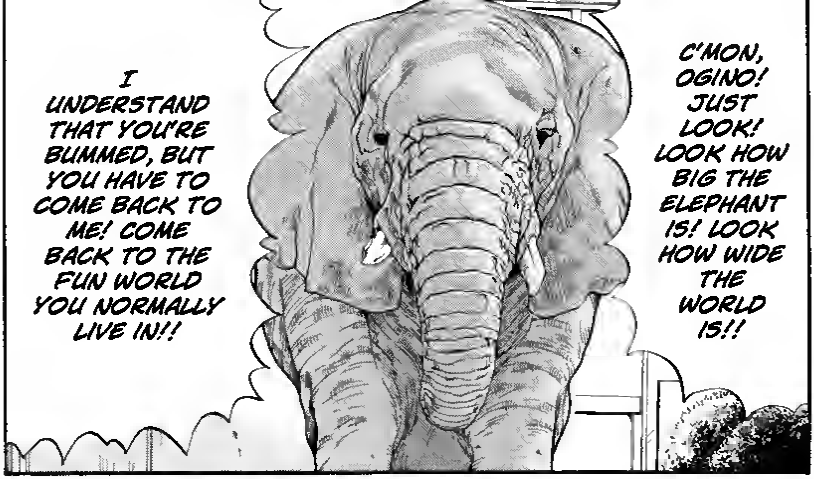
WHAT?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?


I WAS IN A RIVER WITH TANIWAKI, LOOKING FOR A GUN THAT HAD BEEN THROWN IN THERE.
HE WAS GOING TO TAKE THAT GUN AND KILL THE HEAD OF HIS YAKUZA ORGANIZATION WITH IT.
BUT WE COULDN'T FIND IT. WHEN WE TOOK A BREAK, THREE MEN CAME IN A CAR...
...AND KIDNAPPED TANIWAKI AND ME

HAVING A BOYFRIEND WHO GETS INTO THIS RIDICULOUS SHIT?
CAN YOU STAND THIS ANY-MORE, NAGUMO?
IT'S 100% TANIWAKI'S FAULT... WHY WOULD YOU BE MAKING ME MISER-ABLE?
...BUT...YOU'RE BACK SAFE AND SOUND... AND THAT WAS JUST YOU GETTING CAUGHT IN THIS TANIWAKI GUY'S PROBLEMS, RIGHT?
IT REALLY SHOCKED ME IT'S THE WORST POS-SIBLE THING THAT THE WORST POSSIBLE PERSON COULD SAY TO ME
"I'VE BEEN THROUGH ALL THIS BULLSHIT SINCE I MET YOU."
WELL, TANIWAKI TOLD ME...

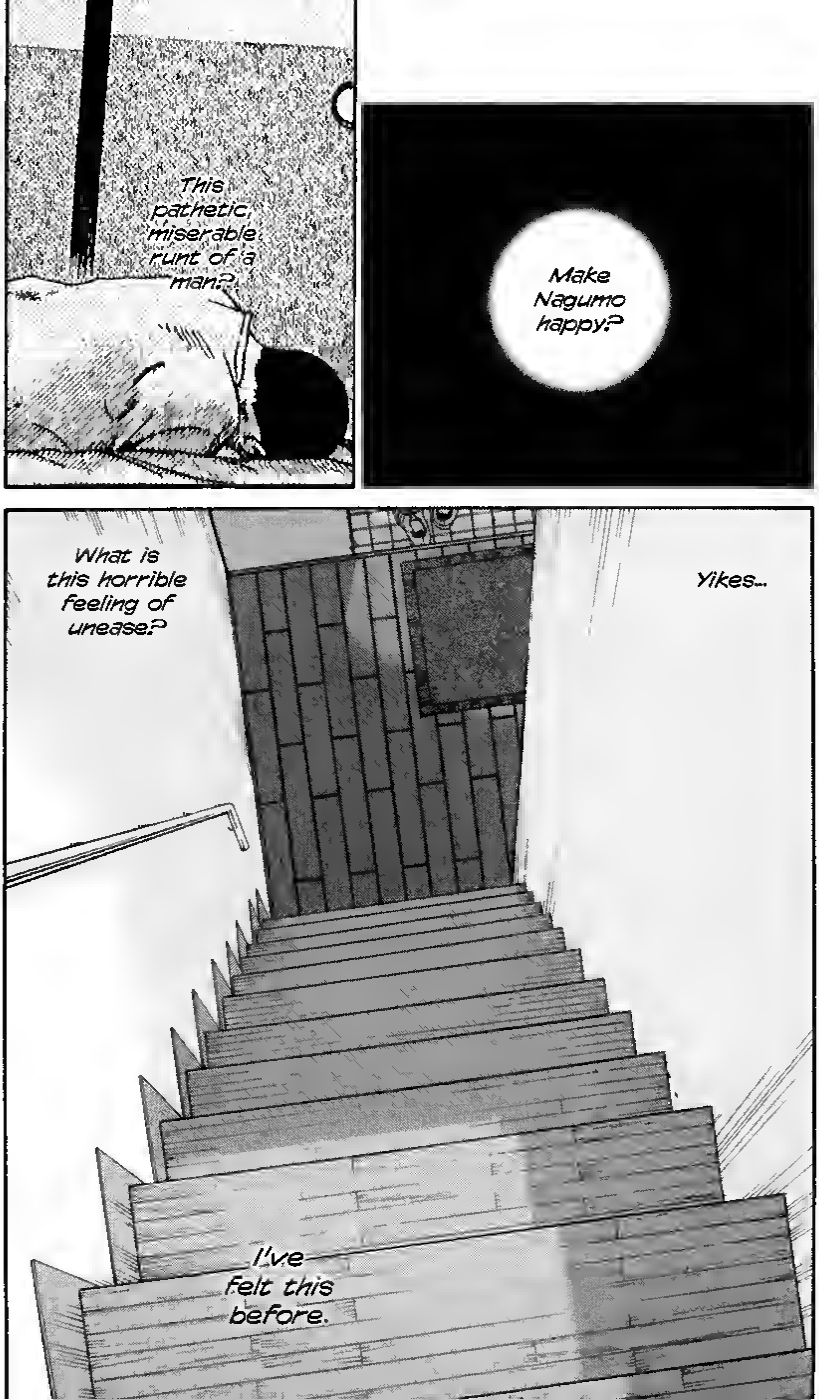

I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT IT ALL THIS TIME. BUT I JUST CAN'T SAY THAT IT'S REALLY NOT TRUE..
ESPECIALLY WHEN IT COMES TO TAKAI.
TAKAI SAID THAT TO ME, TOO. THAT TANIWAKI TAKING HIS MONEY AND HIM HAVING TO QUIT SCHOOL...
...WAS "ALL MY FAULT". THAT I WAS THE ROOT OF ALL HIS MISERY..
IS THIS.. A BREAK-UP TALK WE'RE HAVING?
SO...ARE YOU SAYING TO ME THAT "IT'S POSSIBLE THAT IF YOU STAY WITH ME, YOU'LL BE MISERABLE, SO LET'S JUST SPLIT UP NOW"?

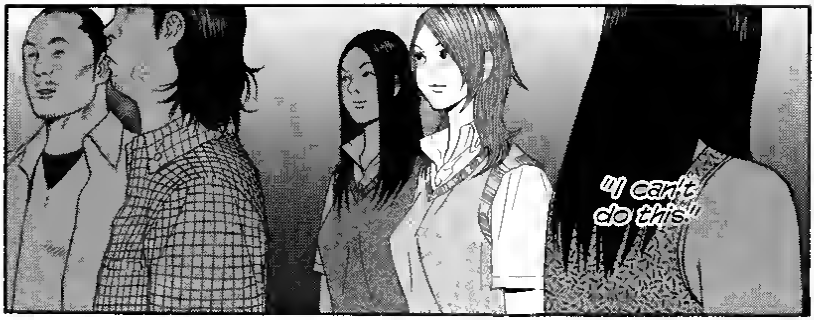
I SERIOUSLY HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO MAKE YOU UN-HAPPY.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO...
OR IS IT A "THINGS MIGHT SUCK IN THE FUTURE, SO LET'S DEAL WITH IT" KINDA THING?
JUST BECAUSE YOU HAVEN'T SO FAR..
I'M SCARED ...
WELL, I DON'T WANT THIS. I DON'T WANT TO BREAK UP WITH YOU AT ALL
BECAUSE SINCE I MET YOU, I HAVEN'T HAD A SINGLE BAD THING HAPPEN TO ME.
...
YOU DON'T WANT TO?!!
WELL, THERE'S NO POINT WHINING ABOUT THIS LET'S STICK TOGETHER, SHALL WE?


I UNDERSTAND THAT YOU'RE BUMMED, BUT YOU HAVE TO COME BACK TO ME! COME BACK TO THE FUN WORLD YOU NORMALLY LIVE IN!!
C'MON, OGINO! JUST LOOK! LOOK HOW BIG THE ELEPHANT IS! LOOK HOW WIDE THE WORLD IS!!

...AND ONE OF THOSE CRAZY YAKUZA SAW YOU ON MY THE SCREEN AND TOLD ME TO BRING YOU.
LIKE, WHAT IF I HADN'T DROPPED MY PHONE INTO THE RIVER...

DON'T YOU HAVE ANYTHING BETTER TO SAY TO ME?! WHAT HAPPENED TO ALL THOSE "I'M GONNA MAKE YOU HAPPIER THAN YOU'VE EVER BEEN BEFORE!!" STATEMENTS?! YOU DON'T EVEN HAVE TO BELIEVE IT!!
IT'S OKAY! THAT'LL NEVER HAPPEN AGAIN! SO STOP IT WITH THIS CRAP ABOUT HOW YOU WANT TO BREAK UP WITH ME BECAUSE YOU THINK I'LL BE MISERABLE!


This pathetic, miserable runt of a man?
Make Nagumo happy?
What is this horrible feeling of unease?
Yikes...
I've felt this before.



We belong on different paths at different speeds.

We're different types of human being.

She and I aren't meant for each other.

Do I have the right to go out with her, just because I love her?

If I do, will it only mean

Should I go through with it, knowing I can't handle it?

That's right...
Why even ask?
She instantly became my everything.
Why did it go away?
That fear disappeared right away.
I truly love this girl named Nagumo...
All I have is the word "love," so all I can say is that I love her...
...but it's enough that I wish there was a word greater and more all-encompassing than that.
And I have the possibility...

HUH?
...IF YOU LOVE SOMEONE ...
...Of making her miserable...
...or making her happy.
COULD YOU MAKE THEM HAPPY?
IF YOU LOVE SOMEONE TO DEATH.
HE ALWAYS SCARES ME WHEN HE GETS THIS WAY.
HMMM... HE'S THINKING. HIS MIND IS CHURNING AWAY..

WHAT ?!!
I'VE GOT IT!!!

THAT'S IT!!!
THE ANSWER IS: "I'LL KEEP TRYING UNTIL YOU'RE MISER-ABLE" !!!

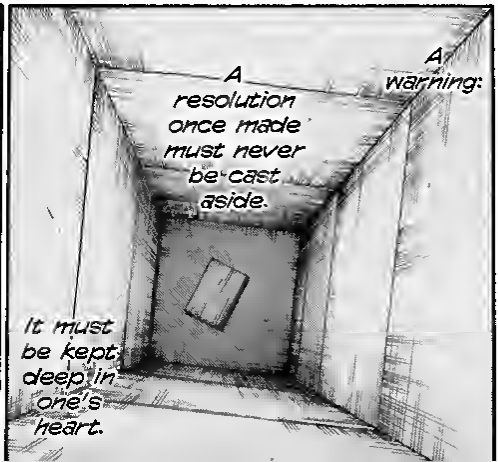
WHY DIDN'T I THINK OF IT?! I HAVE TO DO MY BEST!! OTHERWISE, I'LL DIE !!!
OF COURSE! IT'S SO SIMPLE!! IT ALL MAKES SENSE!!

I'M GONNA MAKE YOU THE HAPPIEST GIRL IN THE ENTIRE WORRRRRRRRLD !!!
OKAY, NAGUMO!! UNTIL THE VERY INSTANT IN TIME THAT YOU BECOME HORRIBLY MISER-ABLE...
A-ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT! JUST SHHHHH!
ARE THEY FIGHTING?
I DID IT, NAGUMO! MY BLUES FROM YES-TERDAY HAVE BEEN BLOWN AWAY! I'M BACK!!
WOWWW WWWW! I FEEL BETTER! I FEEL SO MUCH BETTER! WHY DID I NEVER NOTICE SUCH A SIMPLE THING?!

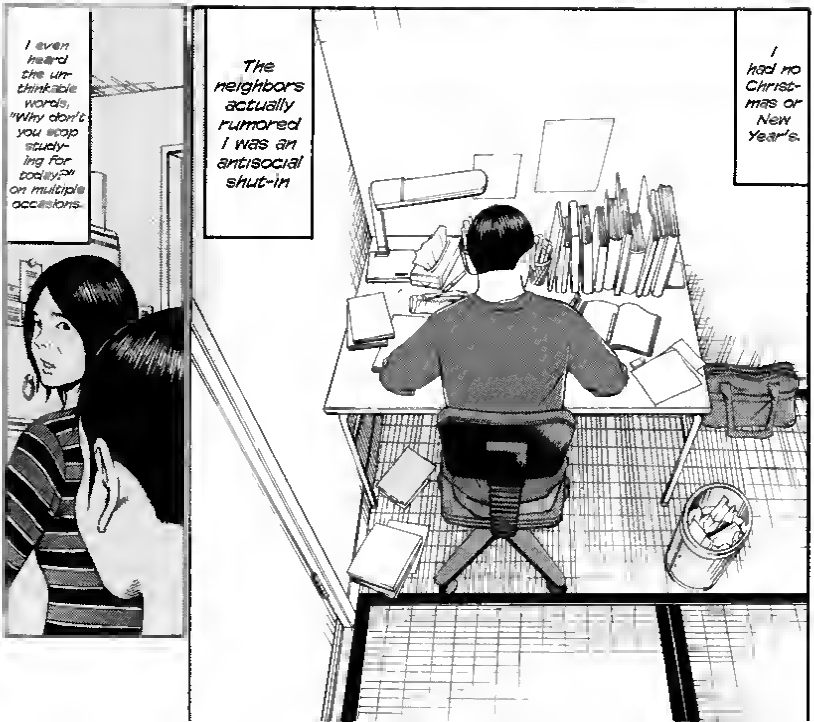
ハッ
PULL IT TOGETHER!
GIVE ME A GOOD HARD SMACK TO SET MY HEAD STRAIGHT!!
WHAT?!
C'MON, NAGUMO! SLAP MY ASS!!
HUH?! HUH?!
うわあああ
EEEEEEEEEEEK! PERVERT! MOLESTER!!
WHA—? HEY! GET BACK HERE, YOU LITTLE BASTARD!!
...to live by my own power.
I made a powerful, almost sulky resolution.
To start off,

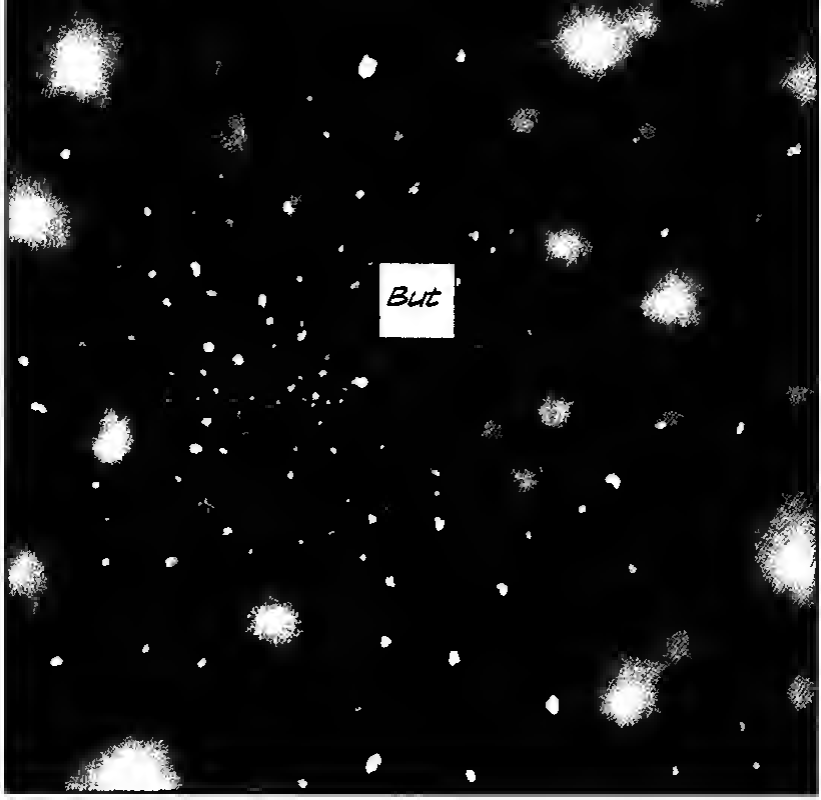
Furthermore,
if there was someone who said they wanted to be with me,
I would accept their presence with gratitude.

It may be unfair, but it's all I have.


A warning:
A resolution once made must never be cast aside.
It must be kept deep in one's heart.

For the next several months,
I became a studying machine...


I had no Christmas or New Year's.
The neighbors actually rumored I was an antisocial shut-in
I even heard the unthinkable words, "Why don't you stop studying for today?" on multiple occasions.


But

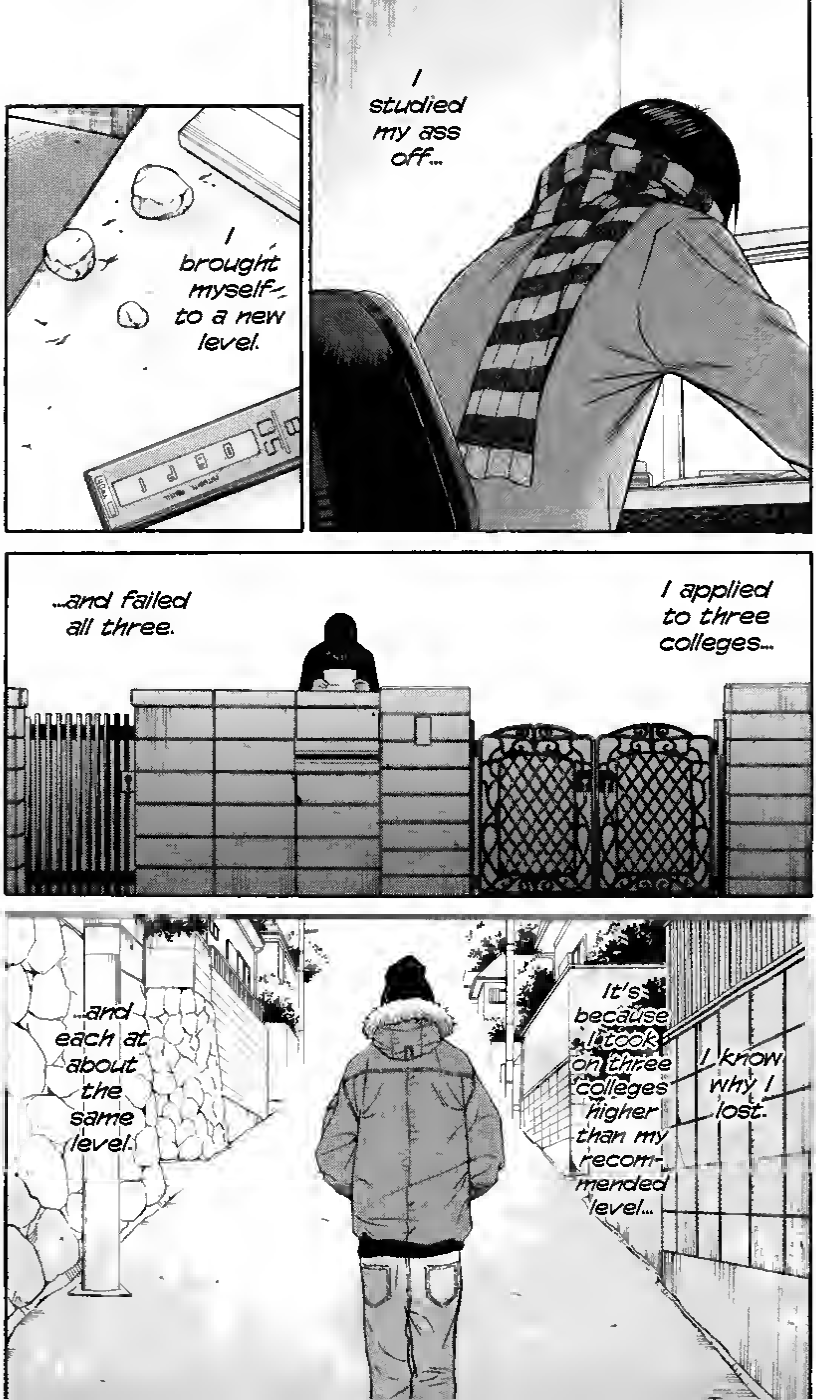
CREAK

did not pass

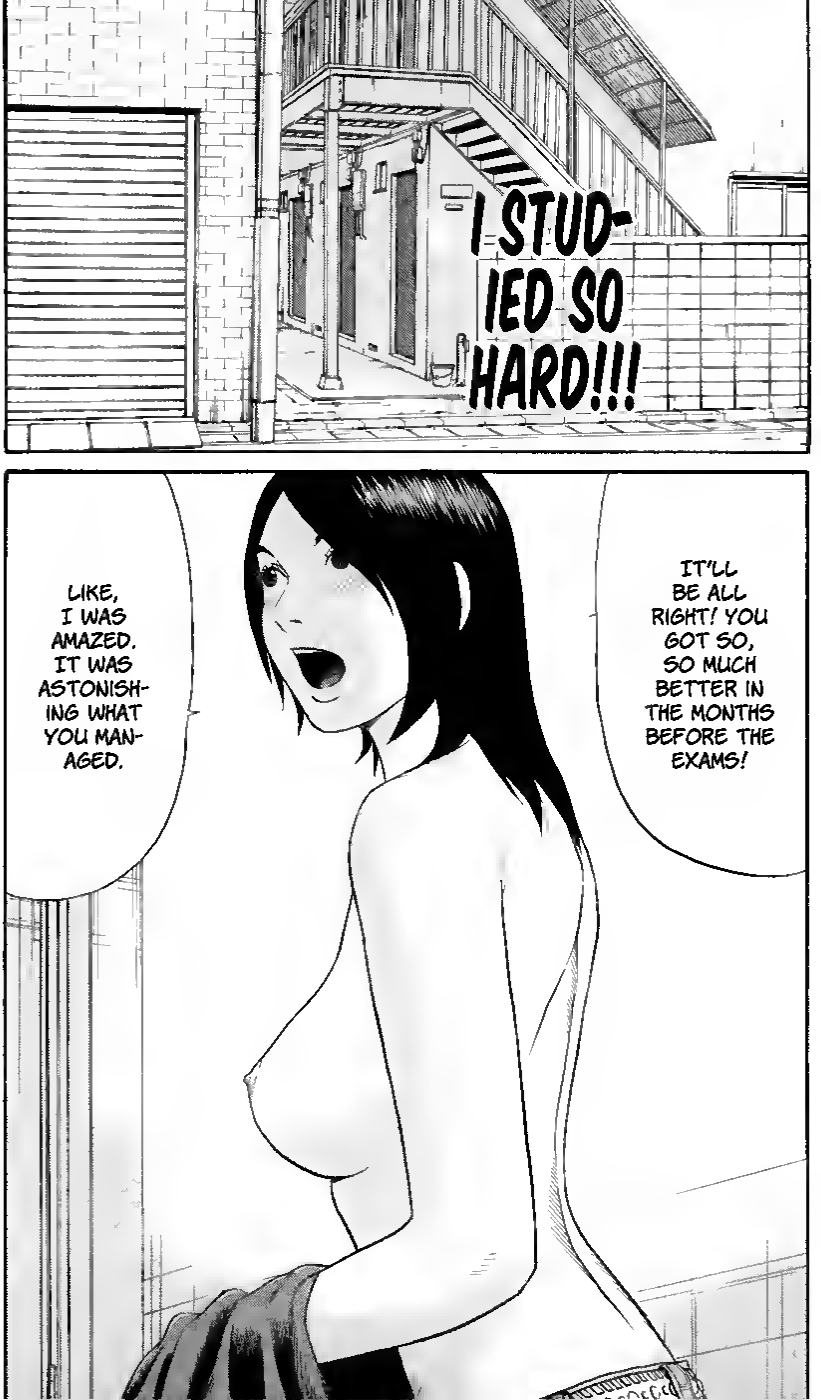
I failed.

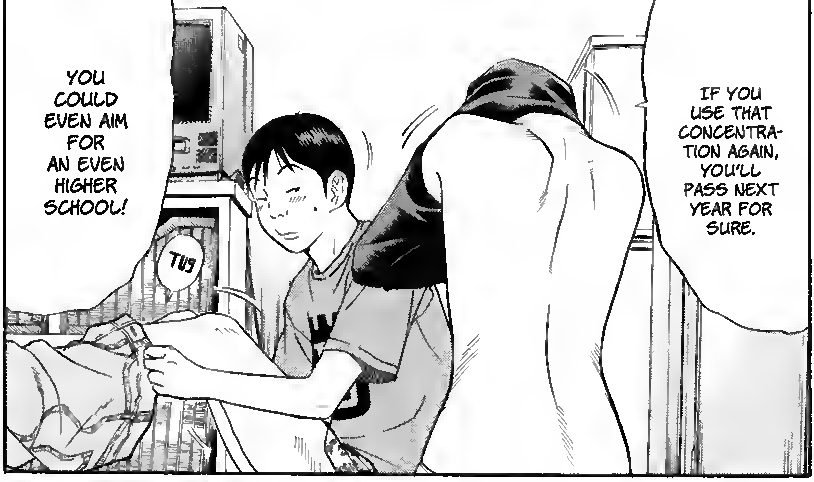
Chapter 61: Ronin

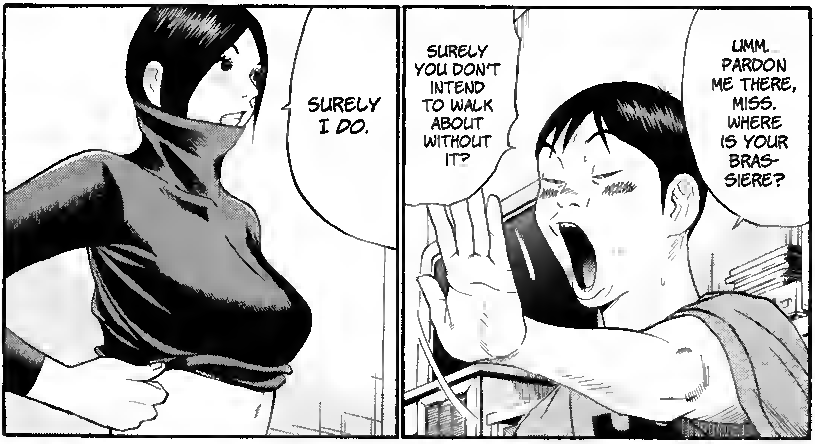
I failed.


I studied my ass off...
I brought myself to a new level.
I applied to three colleges...
...and failed all three.
I know why I lost.
It's because I took on three colleges higher than my recommended level...
...and each at about the same level.

"If I have just a spoonful of good fortune, I might get accepted at all of them."
"If I give it everything I've got, I should pass one of them."
But I was naive...
And now I'm paying the price.
IT'S JUST COMMON SENSE
I TOLD YOU, ALWAYS HAVE A BACK-UP PLAN JUST IN CASE!
YOU GAVE IT YOUR BEST SHOT!
WELL, WHAT CAN YOU DO? CHEER UP.
But I studied so hard...
But...
carhartt

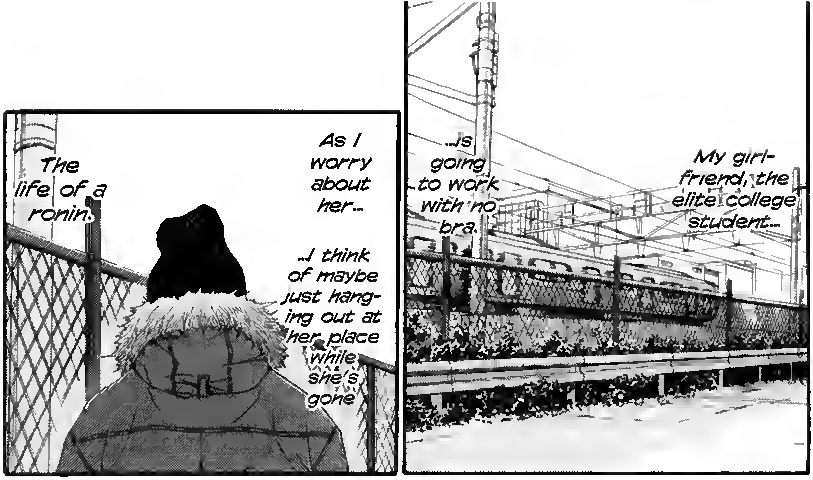

I STUD-
IED SO
HARD!!!
IT'LL BE ALL RIGHT! YOU GOT SO, SO MUCH BETTER IN THE MONTHS BEFORE THE EXAMS!
LIKE, I WAS AMAZED. IT WAS ASTONISH-ING WHAT YOU MAN-AGED.

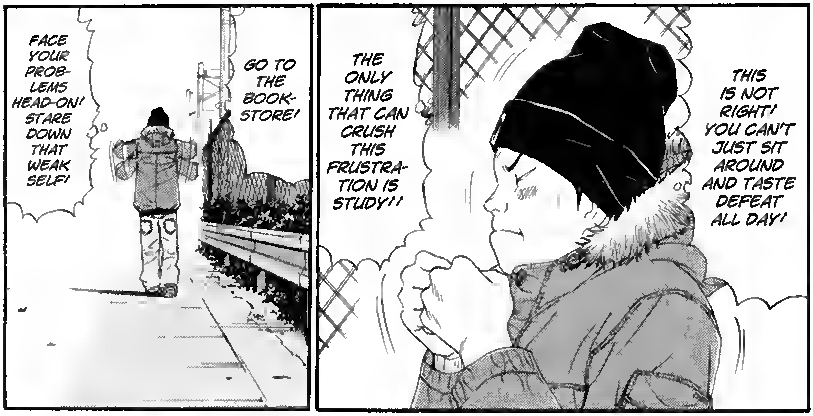

YOU COULD EVEN AIM FOR AN EVEN HIGHER SCHOOL!
TUS
IF YOU USE THAT CONCENTRATION AGAIN, YOU'LL PASS NEXT YEAR FOR SURE.


SURELY I DO.
SURELY YOU DON'T INTEND TO WALK ABOUT WITHOUT IT?
UMM. PARDON ME THERE, MISS. WHERE IS YOUR BRASSIERE?

NO, RIGHT NOW! WHERE DID YOU PUT IT?!
THEN I'LL PUT IT ON TOMORROW.
N-NO, NO, NO! THAT WON'T WORK! WINTER MEANS NOTHING TO MALE HORMONES !!
OH, CHILL OUT I'LL HAVE TONS OF CLOTHES ON
WH-WH-WHAT?! YOU'RE GOING TO WORK WITHOUT A BRA ON?!!

YOU'RE GONNA START AT A PREP SCHOOL IN APRIL, RIGHT?
WELL... THAT'S THE PLAN.
OTHER-WISE MY FRAIL HEART WON'T HOLD UP...
A YEAR IS A VERY LONG TIME...
YOU'D BETTER NOT PANIC AND GO TO ONE OF THE INTENSE PLACES. SOME OF THEM RIP YOU OFF, TOO
I KNOW I'M GONNA TRY TO FIND A NICE EASY-GOING ONE
ALL RIGHT... HAVE A GOOD DAY~
IF YOU GO HOME, DON'T LOSE THE KEY!
ALL RIGHT, SEE YOU LATER!


My girlfriend, the elite college student...
...is going to work with no bra.
As I worry about her...
...I think of maybe just hanging out at her place while she's gone
The life of a ronin.


THIS IS NOT RIGHT! YOU CAN'T JUST SIT AROUND AND TASTE DEFEAT ALL DAY!
THE ONLY THING THAT CAN CRUSH THIS FRUSTRATION IS STUDY!!
GO TO THE BOOKSTORE!
FACE YOUR PROBLEMS HEAD-ON! STARE DOWN THAT WEAK SELF!

BOOKS PheeR

SUOMY
SHIMANO
MICHELIN
HMM?
I'M ON YOUR SIDE
HANG IN THERE, BIAGGI

MURAOKA, THE GIRL WHO REFUSED TO READ A SINGLE WORD FROM THE ENGLISH TEXTBOOK.
THE ONE IN MY CLASS, JUNIOR YEAR.

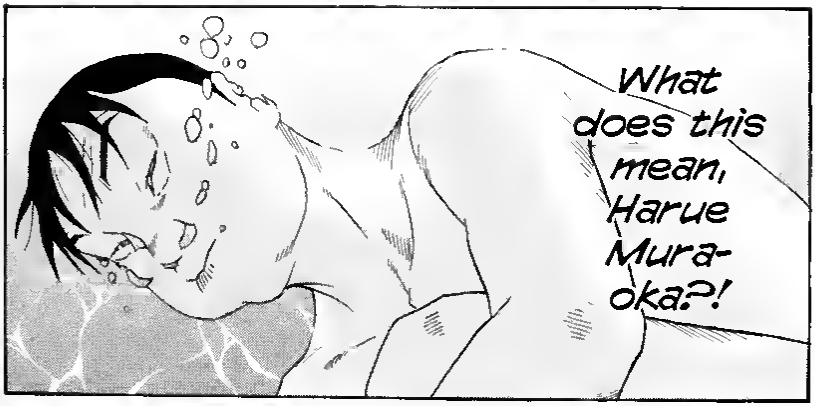
IS THAT... MURAOKA?
WHAT?! IT IS... ISN'T IT?

OH SHIT!!
SHE'S CHANGED... SHE WENT NUTS.
HOLY CRAP, SHE LOOKS LIKE A REGGAE SINGER
...
HELLO

WHOA! REALLY? I HAD NO IDEA.
I WAS SITTING LIKE THREE ROWS BEHIND YOU AT THE EXAM.
DID YOU GET INTO S.U., OGINO?
YEAH, I DID., NOT GOING THERE, THOUGH
YOU PASSED, DIDN'T YOU?
SO I'M TOTALLY IN RONIN MODE NOW...
I, UH... DIDN'T MAKE IT. I TOOK ON THREE SCHOOLS... FAILED ALL OF 'EM.
NOT AT ALL... I TOOK TESTS FOR SOME OTHER GOOD SCHOOLS, BUT I JUST TURNED IN A BLANK SHEET.
YEAH, WELL, YOU WERE ALWAYS SMART. I BET S.U. WAS YOUR BACK-UP PLAN, RIGHT? YOU'RE GOING TO A BETTER SCHOOL THAN THAT.

I DUNNO, THEY JUST MADE ME MAD.
WHY WOULD YOU DO THAT?!!
WHAT?! WHY?!!
NOPE NOT TODAY.
WHY?!
ISN'T SHE WITH YOU TODAY?
ACTUALLY, I SAW YOU A WHILE BACK, TOO.. YOU WERE WITH A SUPER HOT GIRLFRIEND.
WELL, I GOTTA GO SEE YOU LATER.

WHY ?!!


What does this mean, Harue Mura-oka?!

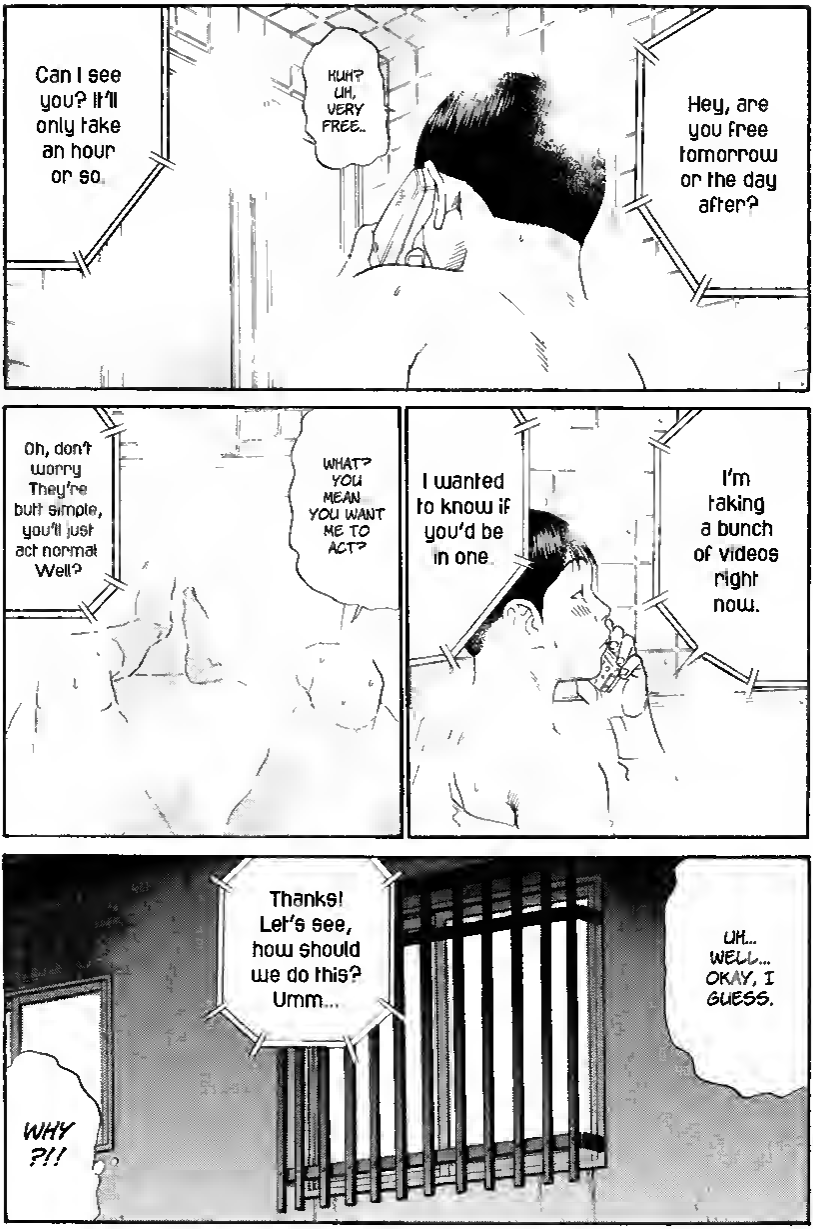
What the hell does that mean ?!!
Because it was making you mad?!
You turned in a blank sheet ?!

I SPEND EVERY DAY ON THE VERGE OF TEARS, BUT SHE'S ALL CONTENT AND DEFIANT!
I-I STUDIED MY ASS OFF...AND FAILED AT THE SCHOOL THAT WAS MY GIRL-FRIEND'S BACKUP PLAN...

GIVE ME YOUR PASSING TEST!!
WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON?! IN FACT, JUST GIVE IT TO ME !!

GAAH !!!
WHO ARE YOU TALKING TO?

JUST BUY ANOTHER CELL PHONE ALREADY!
YOU HAVE A PHONE CALL AGAIN THIS IS REALLY ANNOY-ING
?!!
Hellooooo ?
YOU WON'T BE-LIEVE WHAT—
HELLO, NAGUMO ?! LISTEN TO THIS!
UMM. WHAT'S UP?
OH, ER.. GOOD EVENING ..
Sorry Ogino, it's me!
Mura-oka

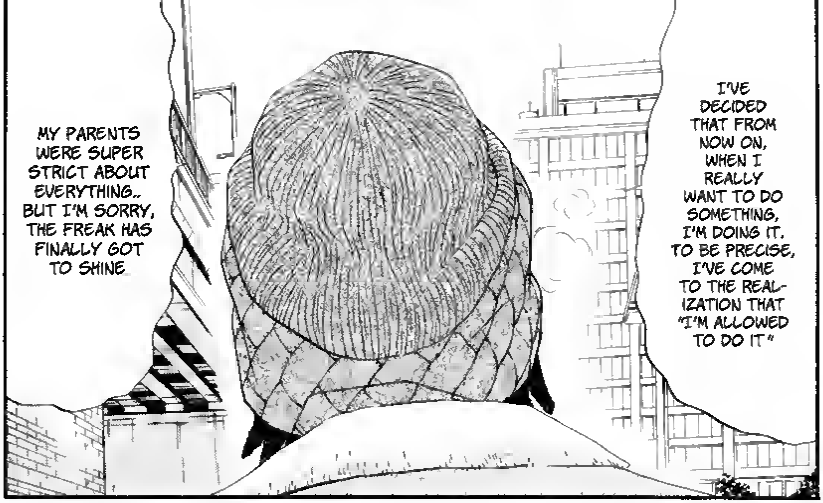

Can I see you? It'll only take an hour or so.
KUH? UH, VERY FREE..
Hey, are you free tomorrow or the day after?
Oh, don't worry They're butt simple, you'll just act normal Well?
WHAT? YOU MEAN YOU WANT ME TO ACT?
I wanted to know if you'd be in one.
I'm taking a bunch of videos right now.
Thanks! Let's see, how should we do this? Umm...
UH... WELL... OKAY, I GUESS.
WHY ?!!

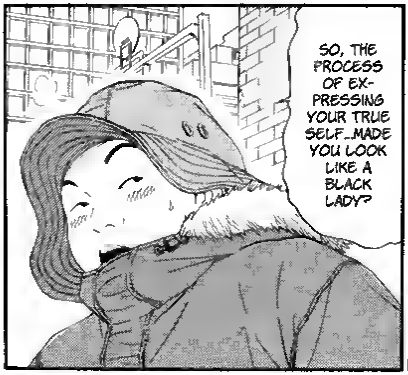
Chapter 62: Art
自由
Kanji Freedom

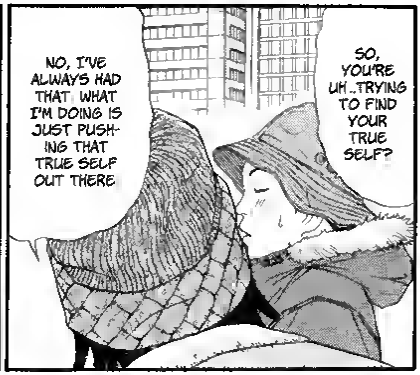
Today, I will ask Harue Muraoka...
...two questions, hear her answers...
...and go home satisfied.
One, why did you take the exams for colleges...
...that you did not intend to attend?
Two, why did you change so violently...
...in such an insecure period?

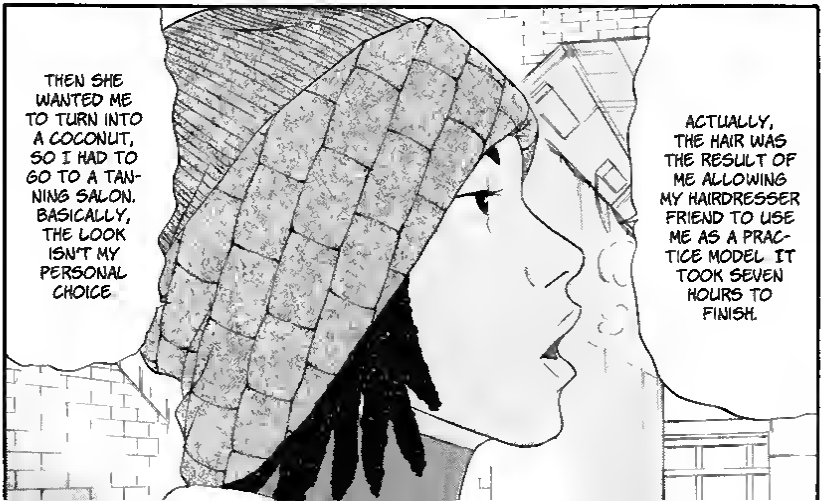
WHAT IF ME MEETING HER TODAY IS ACTUALLY SOME SORT OF RECRUIT-MENT DRIVE?!!
HUH?! COULD SHE HAVE JOINED SOME KIND OF CULT?!
HMM? WAIT A MINUTE.. INSECURE PERIOD?
OHHHH SHIT! IT ALL MAKES SENSE! I'M IN A VULNER-ABLE STATE RIGHT NOW!
NAGUMO ALWAYS SAID CULTS GO AFTER VULNER-ABLE PEOPLE! I SHOULD LEAVE! TIME TO GET THE FUCK OUTTA HERE!
OGI-NOOOOO !!
URGH !!
OVER HERE! HEEEEY!

UH HEY... YOU'RE HERE EARLY
I'M NOT JOINING!
YEAH, I SHOWED UP A BIT EARLY
SO, WHAT'S UP? WANNA GO SOMEWHERE TO TALK?
I MEAN, IT'LL ONLY TAKE TEN MINUTES, SO WE COULD DO IT HERE
UH RIGHT HERE'S FINE
IF I GO TO HER PLACE, WILL THERE BE MORE OF HER PEOPLE THERE?
ALL RIGHT, FIRST I'LL GIVE YOU AN EXPLANATION
YOU'RE PROBABLY CURIOUS, RIGHT?
HUH? ABOUT... WHAT?
ABOUT HOW MUCH I'VE CHANGED...
JUST SO YOU KNOW, IT'S NOT LIKE I'VE JOINED A WEIRD-ASS CULT OR ANYTHING
UH YOU HAVEN'T?
ALL RIGHT... NOTED


MY PARENTS WERE SUPER STRICT ABOUT EVERYTHING.. BUT I'M SORRY, THE FREAK HAS FINALLY GOT TO SHINE
I'VE DECIDED THAT FROM NOW ON, WHEN I REALLY WANT TO DO SOMETHING, I'M DOING IT. TO BE PRECISE, I'VE COME TO THE REALIZATION THAT "I'M ALLOWED TO DO IT"


SO, THE PROCESS OF EXPRESSING YOUR TRUE SELF...MADE YOU LOOK LIKE A BLACK LADY?

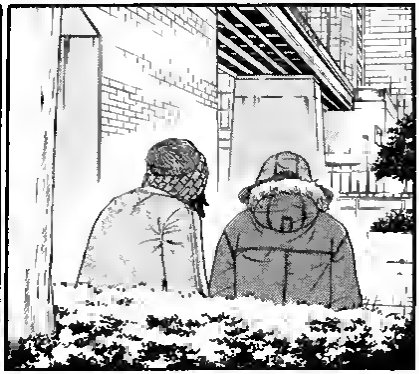

NO, I'VE ALWAYS HAD THAT. WHAT I'M DOING IS JUST PUSHING THAT TRUE SELF OUT THERE
SO, YOU'RE UH..TRYING TO FIND YOUR TRUE SELF?


THEN SHE WANTED ME TO TURN INTO A COCONUT, SO I HAD TO GO TO A TANNING SALON. BASICALLY, THE LOOK ISN'T MY PERSONAL CHOICE
ACTUALLY, THE HAIR WAS THE RESULT OF ME ALLOWING MY HAIRDRESSER FRIEND TO USE ME AS A PRACTICE MODEL IT TOOK SEVEN HOURS TO FINISH.

WE'RE NOT GONNA RELEASE THEM ANY-WHERE OR ANYTHING, IT'S JUST FUN TO DO. WANNA SEE?
THAT HAIRDRESSER AND I TAKE PHOTOS AND STUFF TO-GETHER.
NO CONCEPTS OR ANYTHING! WE JUST SEE STUFF WE WANT TO SEE AND TAKE PICTURES WE WANT TO TAKE
UH, SURE. I'LL TAKE A LOOK.
WHA—?!
FLIP
THIS IS THE HAIR-DRESSER HER NAME IS KIKUCHI.

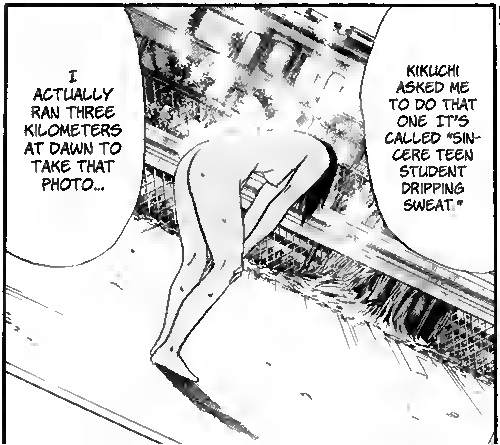
OH, THAT ONE WAS IN GINZA, EARLY IN THE MORNING.
LATER THAT NIGHT, SHE FOUND OUT SHE WAS PREGNANT.

..SHE'S NAKED..



W-WHAT THE HELL IS THIS? IS SHE SUPPOSED TO BE RETARDED?

A GUERILLA-FLASHING, 24-YEAR-OLD PREGGER
KIKUCHI'S A NUDIST FOR LIFE SHE'S A TOTAL EXHIBITIONIST.


I ACTUALLY RAN THREE KILOMETERS AT DAWN TO TAKE THAT PHOTO...
KIKUCHI ASKED ME TO DO THAT ONE IT'S CALLED "SINCERE TEEN STUDENT DRIPPING SWEAT."

OH, THAT ONE'S ME.

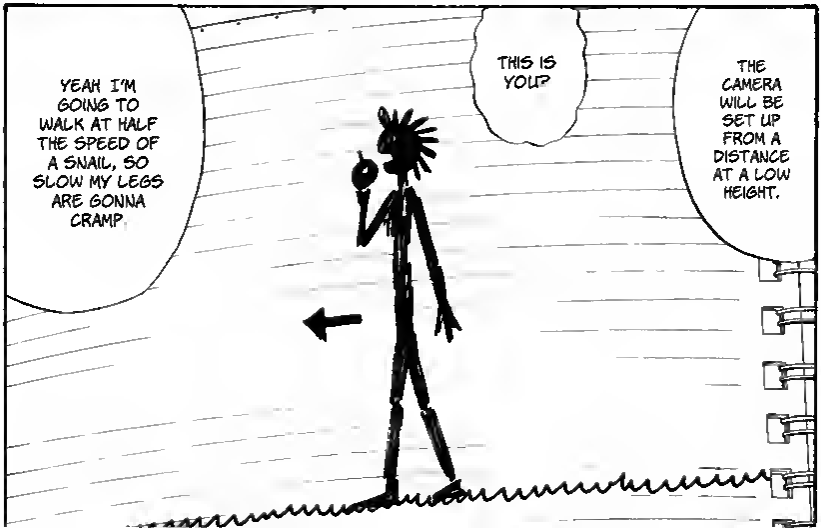
..I'M LOOKING AT PICTURES OF YOU. NAKED..
YOU SHOW THESE TO EX-CLASS-MATES AND THAT'S COOL?
..UH. ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THIS?
WHAT?
BESIDES, I'M ON FIRE NOW. THIS SHIT IS REAL, AND THAT STUFF'S NO ISSUE WITH ME
WELL, WHY SHOULDN'T IT BE, WHEN YOU GET DOWN TO IT?
SO..
..I.. SEE...

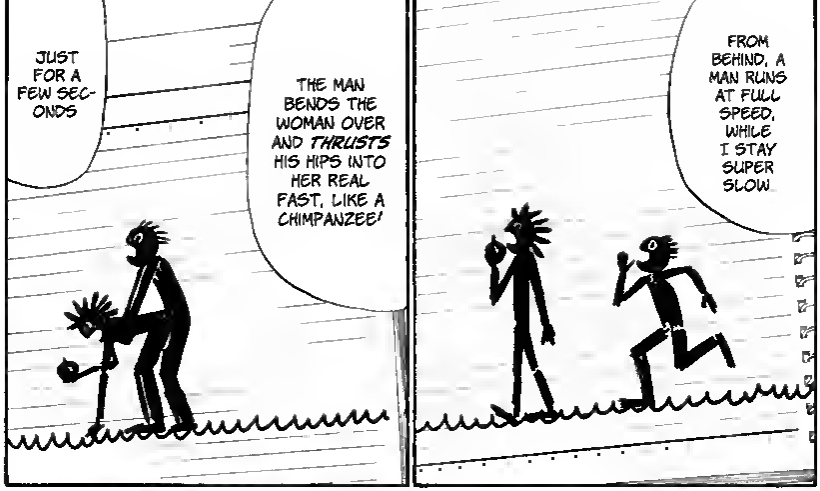
WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO?

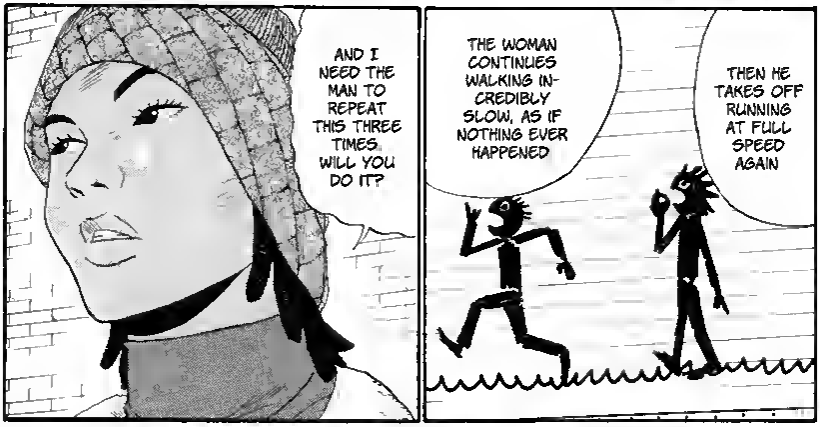
I WANT TO TAKE VIDEOS EXPRESSING THE WORLD OF "ULTIMATE FREEDOM."
THAT WORLD IS ONLY GOING TO BE YOU AND ME, THOUGH

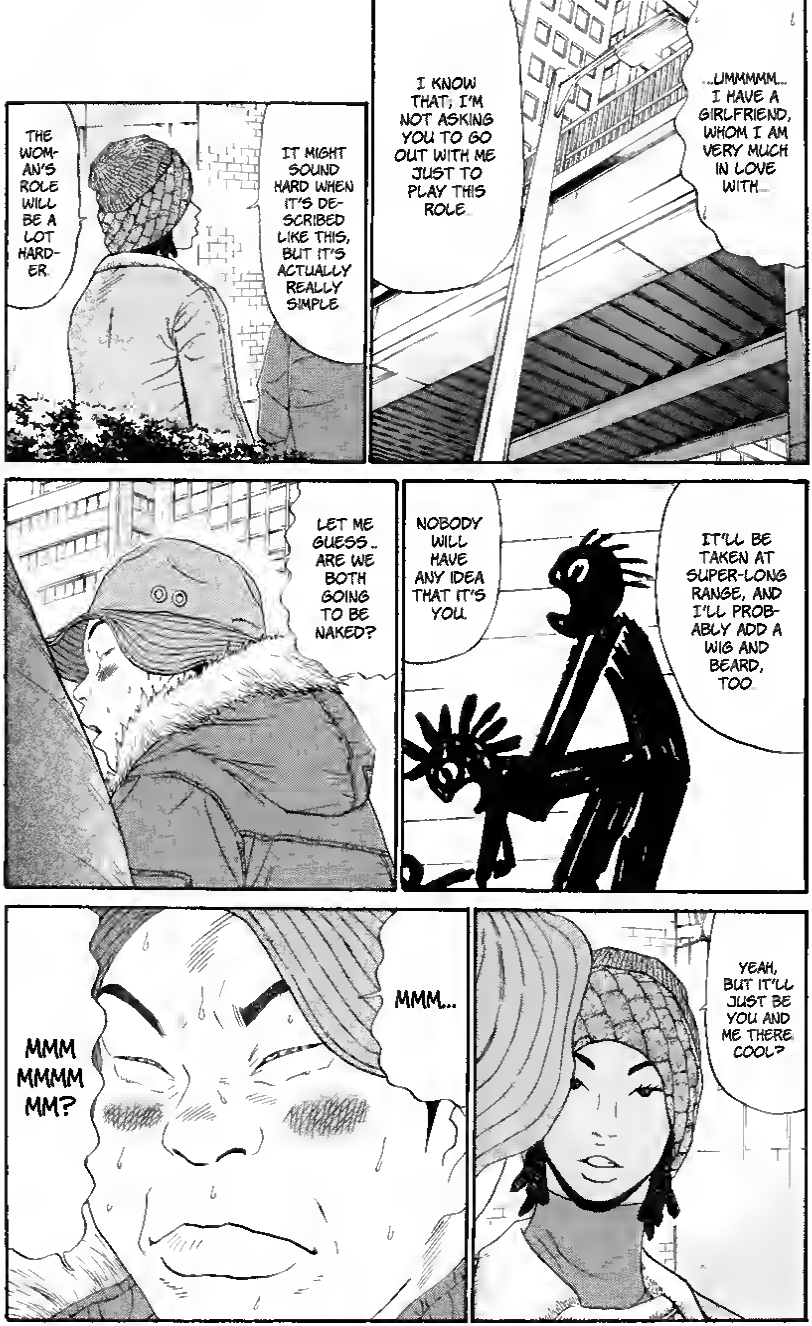
I'VE FOUND A PLACE TO SHOOT IT IN THE MOUNTAINS AROUND OKUTAMA, TOTALLY SECLUDED

I'VE GOT A STORY-BOARD OF MY IDEA. CHECK IT OUT
OKAY...


THE CAMERA WILL BE SET UP FROM A DISTANCE AT A LOW HEIGHT.
THIS IS YOU?
YEAH I'M GOING TO WALK AT HALF THE SPEED OF A SNAIL, SO SLOW MY LEGS ARE GONNA CRAMP.


JUST FOR A FEW SECONDS
THE MAN BENDS THE WOMAN OVER AND *THRUSTS* HIS HIPS INTO HER REAL FAST, LIKE A CHIMPANZEE!
FROM BEHIND, A MAN RUNS AT FULL SPEED, WHILE I STAY SUPER SLOW

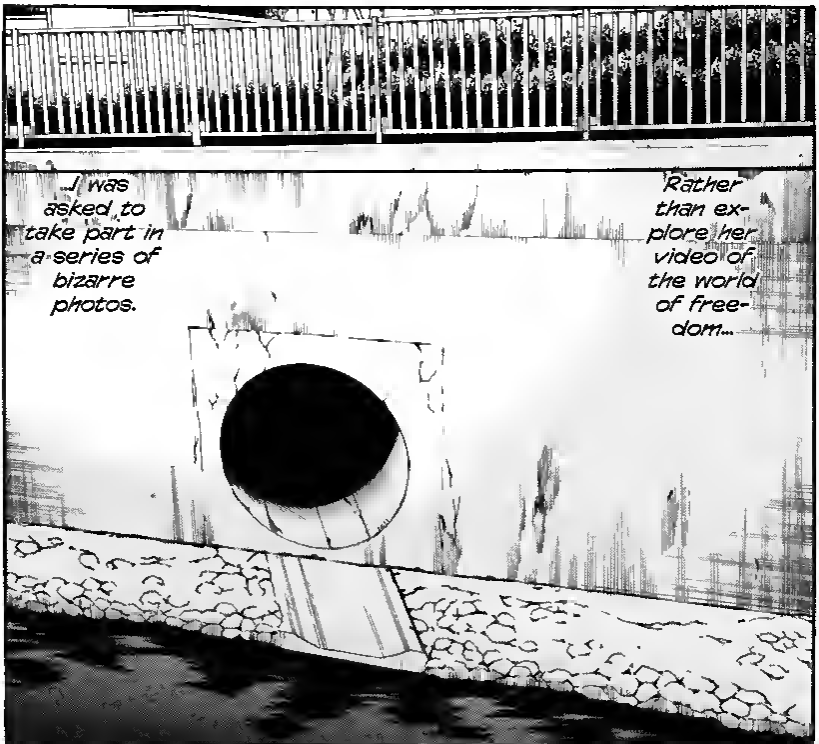

AND I NEED THE MAN TO REPEAT THIS THREE TIMES. WILL YOU DO IT?
THE WOMAN CONTINUES WALKING INCREDIBLY SLOW, AS IF NOTHING EVER HAPPENED
THEN HE TAKES OFF RUNNING AT FULL SPEED AGAIN


...UMMMMM... I HAVE A GIRLFRIEND, WHOM I AM VERY MUCH IN LOVE WITH...
I KNOW THAT, I'M NOT ASKING YOU TO GO OUT WITH ME JUST TO PLAY THIS ROLE.
IT MIGHT SOUND HARD WHEN IT'S DESCRIBED LIKE THIS, BUT IT'S ACTUALLY REALLY SIMPLE
THE WOMAN'S ROLE WILL BE A LOT HARDER.
IT'LL BE TAKEN AT SUPER-LONG RANGE, AND I'LL PROBABLY ADD A WIG AND BEARD, TOO.
NOBODY WILL HAVE ANY IDEA THAT IT'S YOU.
LET ME GUESS.. ARE WE BOTH GOING TO BE NAKED?
YEAH, BUT IT'LL JUST BE YOU AND ME THERE. COOL?
MMM...
MMM MMMM MM?

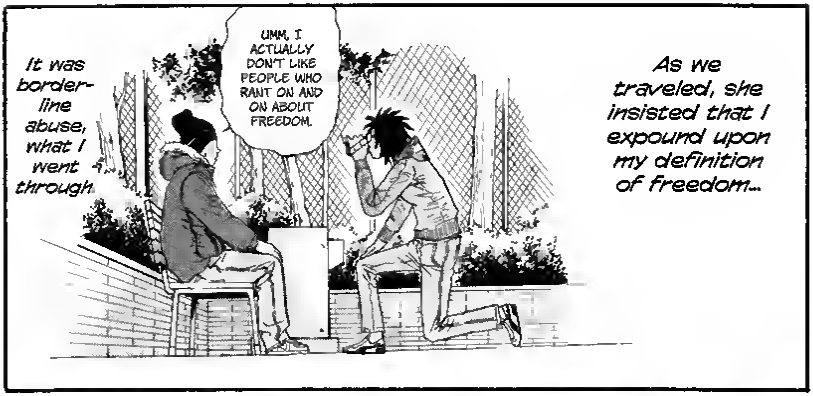
ANYWAY, ARE YOU FREE TO-MORROW?
JUST THINK ABOUT IT YOU DON'T HAVE TO DECIDE NOW

IN THE FINAL THING, THE MAN WILL BE RUNNING AROUND AT HYPER-SPEED!
AND ACTUALLY, IT'LL BE TAKEN AT A SLOW FRAME RATE, SO THE WOMAN WILL APPEAR TO BE NORMAL SPEED

The next day


...I was asked to take part in a series of bizarre photos.
Rather than explore her video of the world of freedom...

and put into a futon to sleep.
I'd be stranded on a little divider in the river...
SUPER FUN! I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO SEE PHOTOS LIKE THIS
SO IS THIS FUN FOR YOU?
Muraoka would take pictures from the surrounding area.
...and were chased away by cops twice.
WHAT, AGAIN ?!?
RUN, OGINO! THE FUZZ IS ONTO US! BIKE COP AT OUR SIX!!
We took shots in three places...


It was borderline abuse, what I went through...
UMM, I ACTUALLY DON'T LIKE PEOPLE WHO RANT ON AND ON ABOUT FREEDOM.
As we traveled, she insisted that I expound upon my definition of freedom...

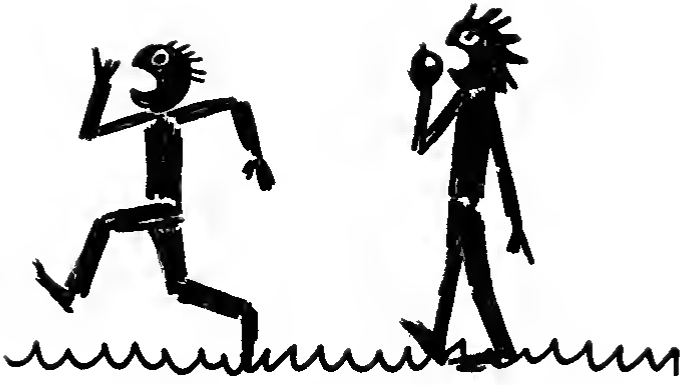
KUH?
I WAS RIGHT.

...I'M NOT NORMAL?
AND THE FACT THAT YOU THINK YOU'RE TOTALLY NORMAL IS THE SCARY PART!

I HAD THAT IDEA WHEN WE WERE IN JUNIOR YEAR AT SCHOOL.
I ALWAYS THOUGHT YOU WERE AN INTERESTING PERSON

IT WAS ALWAYS A MYSTERY TO ME. I'D HAVE QUIT SCHOOL LONG BEFORE THAT.
TANIWAKI TREATED YOU LIKE TOTAL CRAP...BUT YOU STILL CAME TO SCHOOL EVERY DAY.
HOW COULD YOU STAND IT?
CAN I ASK YOU SOMETHING I'VE ALWAYS BEEN CURIOUS ABOUT?
"IT'D BE SUCH A WASTE TO LET THAT ASSHOLE CHANGE YOUR LIFE." I GUESS THAT'S WHY.
WELL.. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN SAD TO QUIT SCHOOL OVER THAT...AND TAKAI ALWAYS SAID..
ARE YOU GONNA DO THIS... ARTY STUFF FOR-EVER?
BUT WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO, MU-RAOKA?
UMH, FOR ME IT DEFINITELY WOULD BE.. MY DREAMS FOR THE FUTURE ARE TOTALLY NORMAL ONES
BUT TAKAI DID QUIT. DID HE MEAN THAT QUITTING SCHOOL WASN'T A BIG CHANGE IN LIFE?

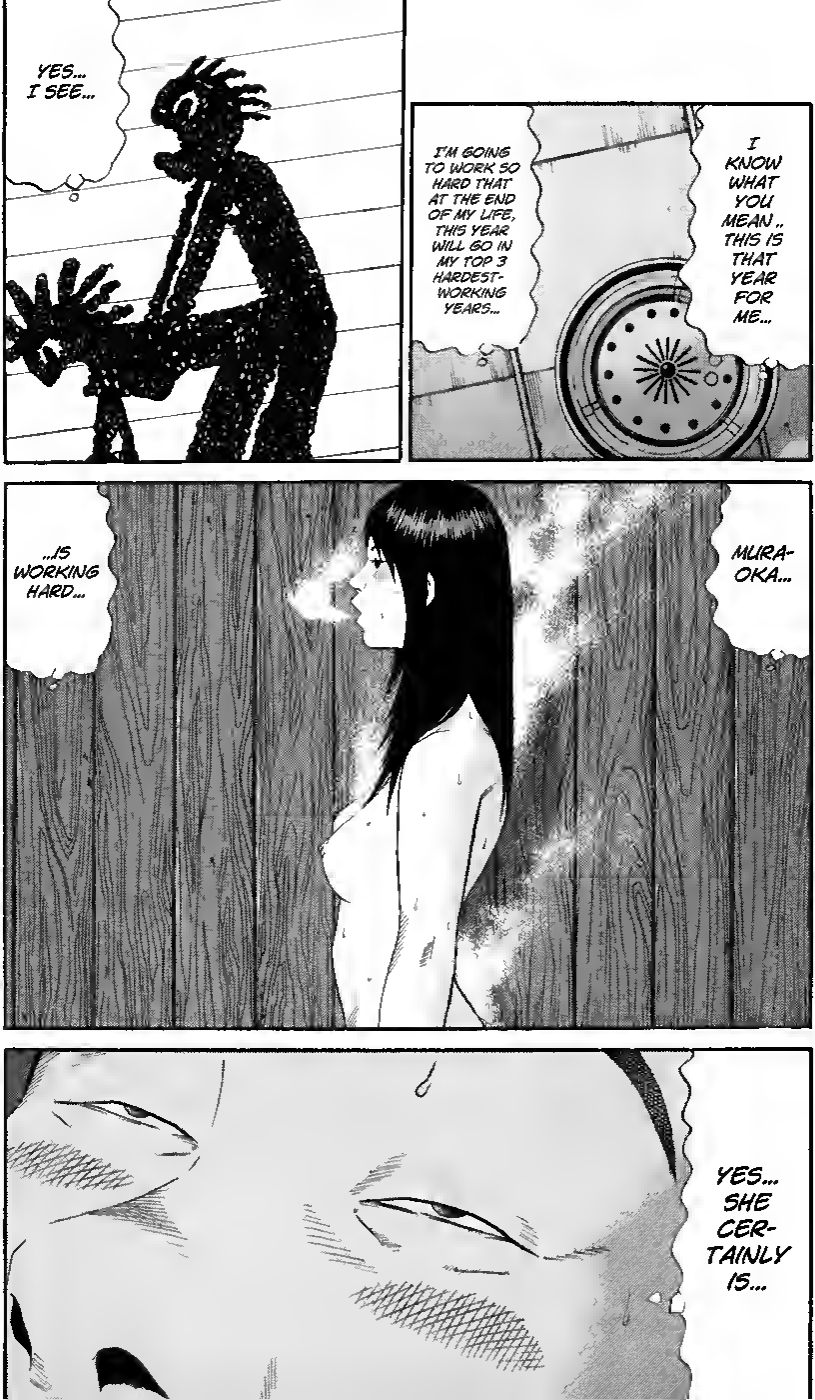
I TOLD YOU, IT'S NOT ART! I'M JUST DOING WHAT I WANT TO DO.
AND I'M NOT REALLY THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE... AT ALL
DOESN'T THAT MAKE YOU NERVOUS? DOESN'T IT KEEP YOU UP AT NIGHT?
I THINK IT WOULD PLEASE TELL ME IT DOES.
SORRY, BUT IT SERIOUSLY DOESN'T RIGHT NOW. I HONESTY CAN'T BELIEVE IT MYSELF.
I JUST FEEL TOTALLY FULFILLED EVERY SINGLE DAY MY LIFE IS FULL OF ENTHUSIASM.
WHOAAAAA... FOR REAL? MAN, THAT SOUNDS NICE
FULFILLMENT! THAT'S GREAT.
YES, IT IS GREAT.
IT'S EVERYTHING IN LIFE, ISN'T IT?



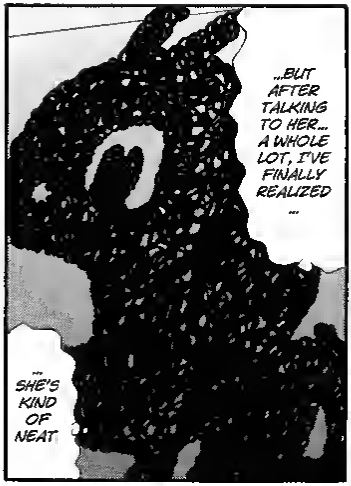
Chapter 63: Accomplishments

HMMMMM.
...HMMM-MMMM...

IT STARTS AGAIN NEXT MONTH. THE END-LESS STUDY-ING...
...THE DAYS OF DEPRES-SION, WHEN NARY A LAUGH ES-CAPES MY TUM-TUM...
SIGHHH... THIS IS GONNA SUCK...
BUT THIS IS WHERE I REALLY NEED TO BUCKLE DOWN...
RE-MEMBER THE GREAT WORDS MURAOKA BLESSED YOU WITH...
I WANT MEMORIES OF PLACES WHERE "I BROKE THROUGH." TIMES WHEN "I DID WHAT I WANTED."
ACCOM-PLISHMENTS THAT WILL PROVIDE ME WITH CONFI-DENCE... I CREATE THIS VERSION OF ME NOW FOR THE SAKE OF MY FUTURE SELF.


YES... I SEE...
I'M GOING TO WORK SO HARD THAT AT THE END OF MY LIFE, THIS YEAR WILL GO IN MY TOP 3 HARDEST-WORKING YEARS...
I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN. THIS IS THAT YEAR FOR ME...
...IS WORKING HARD...
MURA-OKA...
YES... SHE CER-TAINLY IS...

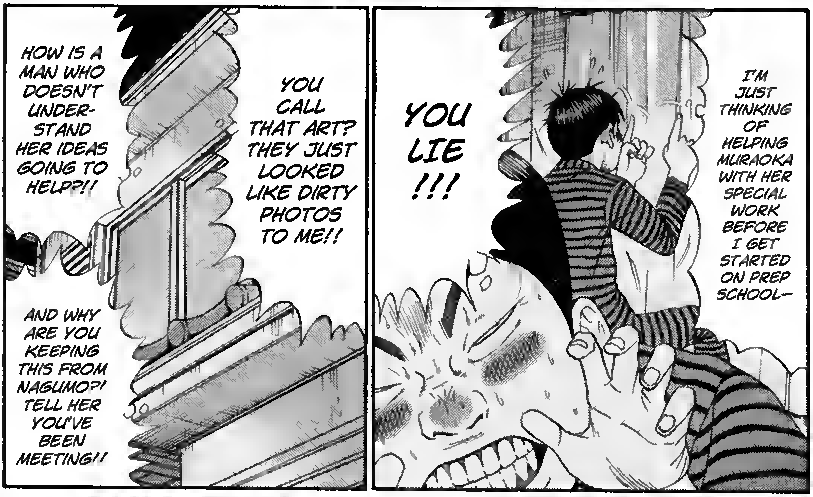
HMM MMMM MM.

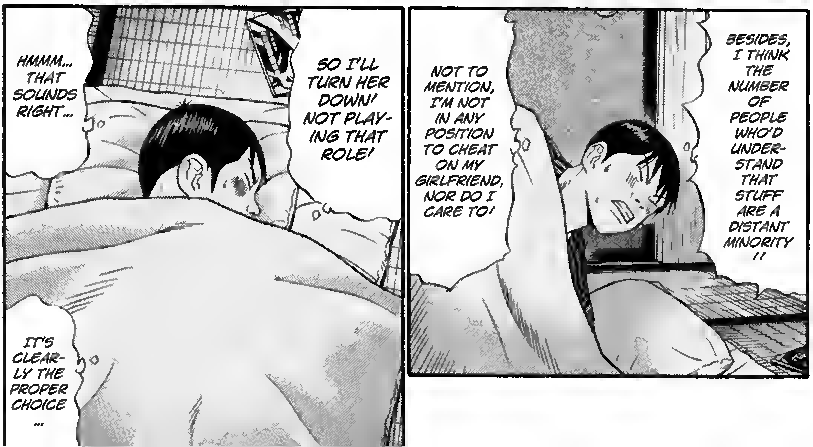

...BUT AFTER TALKING TO HER... A WHOLE LOT, I'VE FINALLY REALIZED ...
... SHE'S KIND OF NEAT.

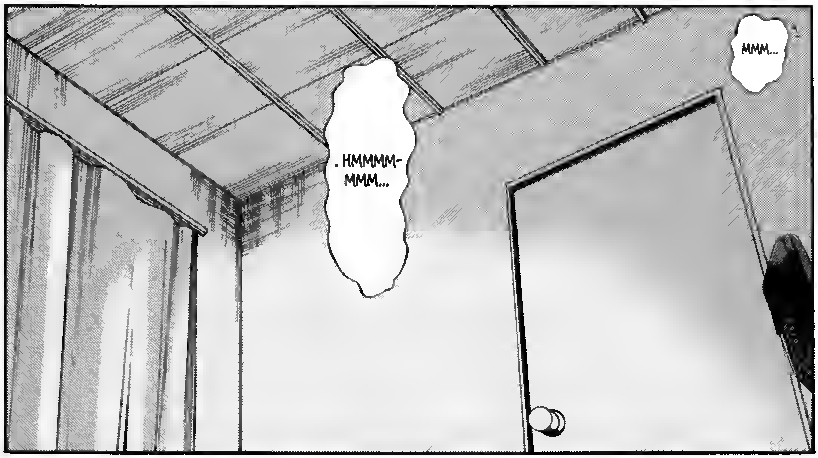
I NEVER NOTICED WHEN WE WERE IN CLASS TOGETHER ...
IT'S SO STRANGE ..

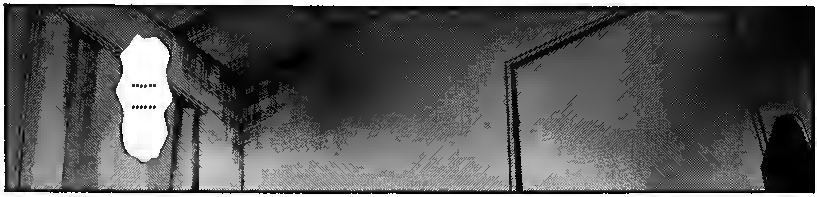
SHOULD I TRY... HER ROLE OUT?
IN SECRET FROM NAGUMO, OF COURSE —
HUH?!!
WHAT WHAT WHAT IS THIS?!
COULD IT POSSIBLY BE... ADULTERY ?!?
NO, IT'S NOT! NOT AT ALL!
IT'S NOT ADULTERY, IT'S ART!!
WHAT IS THIS SUPPOSED TO MEAN? AM I SERIOUSLY SWOONING OVER MURAOKA?!
NO, I'M NOT! I'M NOT AT ALL! WOULD YOU JUST LISTEN TO ME?!

I'M IN LOVE WITH NAGUMO!! I'M COMPLETELY SMITTEN !!
SHE ENCOMPASSES EVERYTHING OF MY EXISTENCE !!!


I'M JUST THINKING OF HELPING MURAOKA WITH HER SPECIAL WORK BEFORE I GET STARTED ON PREP SCHOOL—
YOU LIE !!!
YOU CALL THAT ART? THEY JUST LOOKED LIKE DIRTY PHOTOS TO ME!!
HOW IS A MAN WHO DOESN'T UNDERSTAND HER IDEAS GOING TO HELP?!
AND WHY ARE YOU KEEPING THIS FROM NAGUMO?! TELL HER YOU'VE BEEN MEETING!!


BESIDES, I THINK THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO'D UNDERSTAND THAT STUFF ARE A DISTANT MINORITY !!
NOT TO MENTION, I'M NOT IN ANY POSITION TO CHEAT ON MY GIRLFRIEND, NOR DO I CARE TO!
SO I'LL TURN HER DOWN! NOT PLAYING THAT ROLE!
HMMM... THAT SOUNDS RIGHT...
IT'S CLEARLY THE PROPER CHOICE ...


MMM...
. HMMMM-MMM...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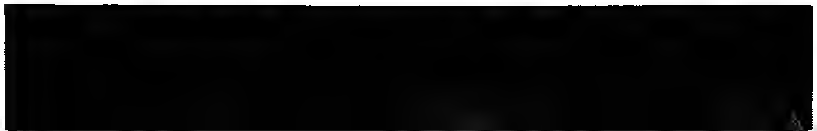
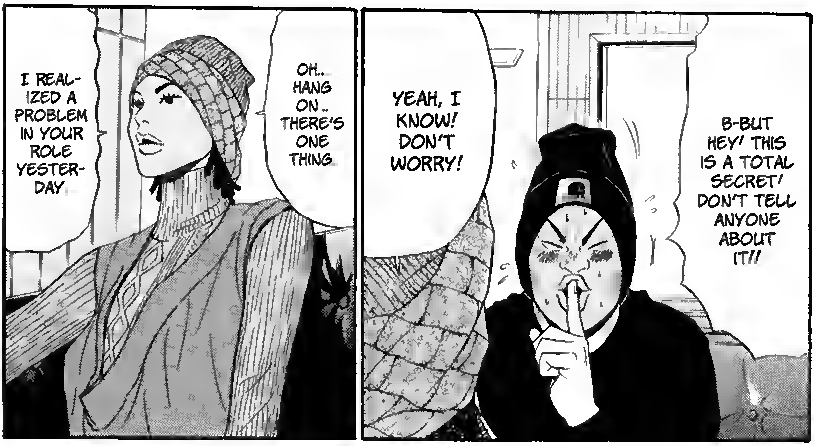


The next day
SICK
YOU'LL PLAY THE MALE ROLE?!
WOW, REALLY?!
...YES.
Y...

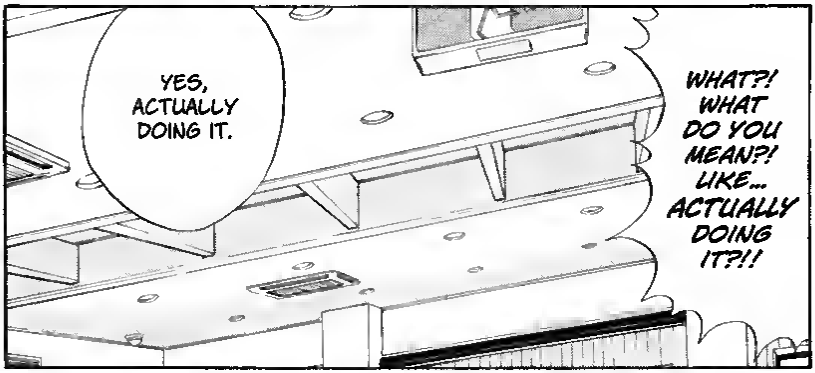
UH... YEAH...
YESSSS! THANKS, OGINO! THIS IS AWE-SOME!!


I REAL-IZED A PROBLEM IN YOUR ROLE YESTER-DAY.
OH.. HANG ON.. THERE'S ONE THING.
YEAH, I KNOW! DON'T WORRY!
B-BUT HEY! THIS IS A TOTAL SECRET! DON'T TELL ANYONE ABOUT IT!!

..ABOUT HIS PART DOWN THERE.
I'M NOT SURE WHAT TO DO.
..WHAT KIND?
HUH? A PROB-LEM?

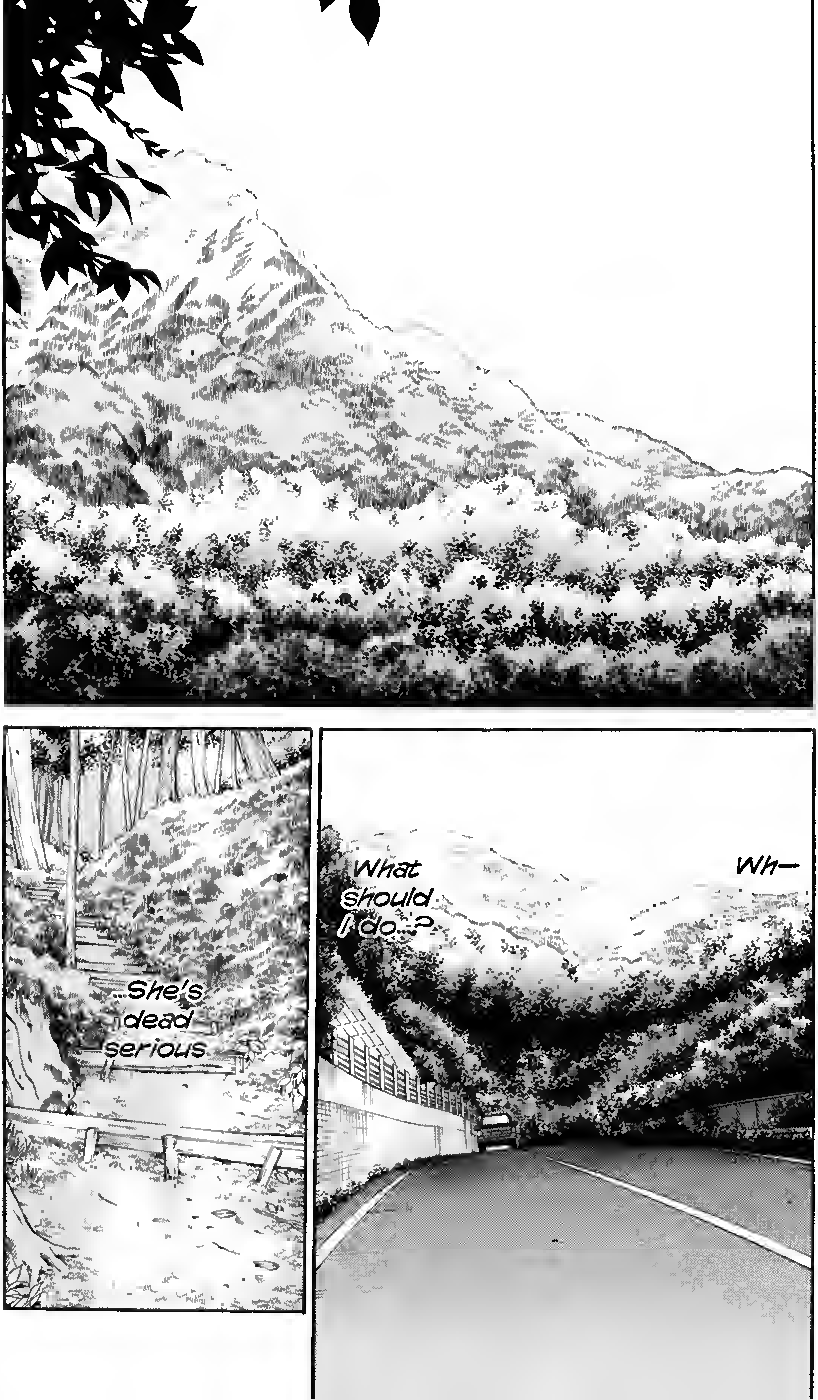
I REALIZED THAT KEEPING THAT STATE CONSTANT DURING THE ENTIRE FILMING COULD BE TOUGH
EVEN FROM A DISTANCE, IT'LL BE FROM THE SIDE, SO THE SILHOUETTE SHOULD BE CLEAR
YEAH. I WANT HIM TO BE IN A STATE OF CONSTANT AROUSAL
DOWN THERE? IN HIS... GROINAL REGION?
SO YOU'LL WEAR SKIN-COLORED BRIEFS AND HOOK IT ON TO THE OUTSIDE
I ASKED KIKUCHI ABOUT THIS, AND SHE SAID SHE HAS ONE OF THOSE FAKE STRAP-ON PENISES THAT LESBIANS USE
OH NO, WE'RE STICKING TO THAT ANGLE, EXACTLY AS PLANNED!
...MEANING FILMING FROM A DIAGONAL OR SOMETHING?
...THIS IS JUST AN ACT, RIGHT?
SO... JUST CHECKING, BUT... WHEN THE GUY GOES WILD WITH HIS PELVIS..
SURE.
UMMM... CAN I ASK ONE THING?

NO.
NOT AN ACT.

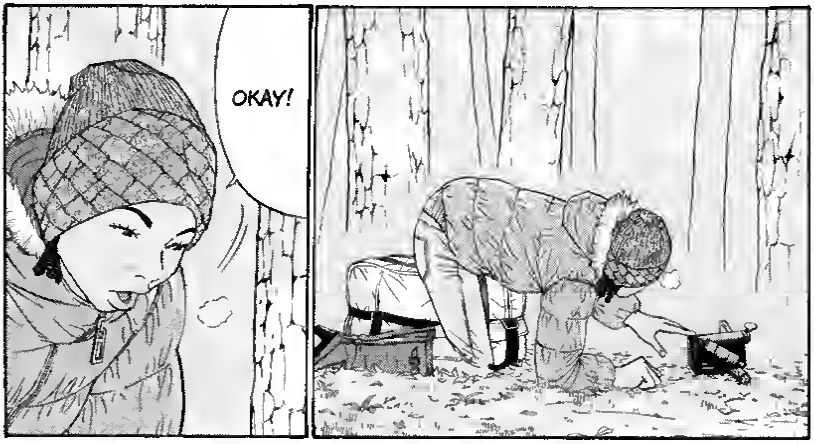

WHAT?! WHAT DO YOU MEAN?! LIKE... ACTUALLY DOING IT?!!
YES, ACTUALLY DOING IT.

IT MIGHT BE TOO FAR TO ACTUALLY TELL THE DIFFERENCE, AND IT MIGHT NOT BE TOTALLY NECESSARY AT ALL...
.. BUT THE ACTUAL ACT ITSELF IS, TO ME, THE FOCAL POINT AND GREATEST STRENGTH OF THE WORK.

MMM-MMMM ?!?
HMM... MMMM MM?!
LIKE I SAID, WE'LL USE THE STRAP-ON FOR THAT.
BUT DON'T WORRY, YOU DON'T HAVE TO STICK YOUR OWN IN ME.
ARE WE SHOOTING THIS TODAY ?!
HUH?! WAIT A SECOND, MURA-OKA!!
I'LL GET THE OTHER TOOLS TOO, SO WE'LL MEET UP HERE IN TWO HOURS!
ALL RIGHT, I'M GOING TO RUN OVER TO KIKUCHI'S RIGHT NOW!
TWO HOURS! MAKE SURE YOU GET LUNCH BEFORE THAT!
BETTER GET TO OUR LO-CATION BEFORE NIGHT FALLS!
WHUH ?!!


...She's dead serious
What should I do...?
Wh—

deader than the deadest dog serious.
Mura-oka is straight-up...


OKAY!

SO! LET'S TRY ONE QUICK PRACTICE RUN!
HUH?
OH, OKAY
COME ON OVER HERE I'LL PUT YOUR STUFF ON YOU.
WHAT? ARE WE TAKING OUR CLOTHES OFF NOW?! FOR THE PRACTICE ?!
YEAH PUT ON THIS UNDERWEAR, AND I'VE GOT A HAIR FOR YOU
WHOA! IT'S COLD! IT'S SO COLD!
WELL, SUCK IT UP

THAT SHOULD DO IT!
YESSS !!
SPLAT
OOOO-OOOOH! NICE! VERY NICE! TWICE AS GOOD AS I'D BEEN HOPING!
HMM... MMMMM-MMMM.

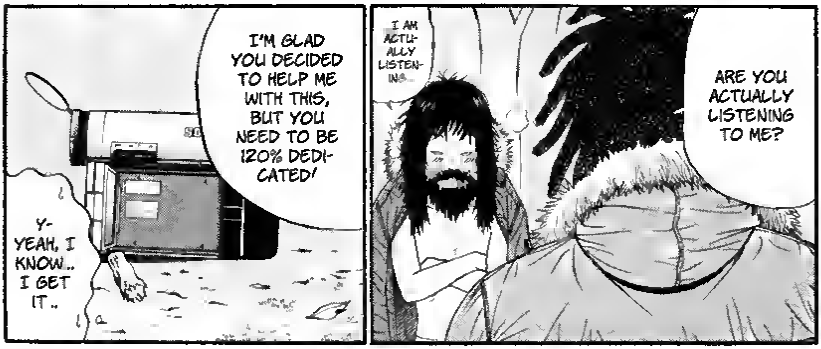
WHAT THE HELL ?!!
WHAT THE JESUS FUCK AM I DOING?!!
THE MOUN-TAINS ARE BRUTAL! THIS IS WAY COLDER THAN THE SINCERE TEEN STUDENT SERIES !!
. UH... UHHHHHH ...
?!!
WHOA AAAAA AAA!! YOU'RE RIGHT!! IT'S FREEZ-ING!!

Chapter 64: Practice Run

WEATHER'S PERFECT TOO! I WAS IMAGINING A BIT OF A CLOUDY SKY JUST LIKE THIS.
WHOAAA, IT'S COLD! I WASN'T EXPECTING THIS CHILL, THOUGH!!
OKAY!

WELL... LET'S RUN THROUGH A SIMULATION FIRST!
FIRST, I'LL START WALKING FROM THIS LOCATION
LET'S DO THAT...
UH.. YEAH...

YOU'RE GOING TO COME RUNNING FROM WAY BEHIND. BY THE TIME YOU ENTER THE FRAME, YOU SHOULD BE AT TOP SPEED.
IT MIGHT HURT THE BOTTOM OF YOUR FEET, BUT IT NEEDS TO BE A SPRINT.


ARE YOU ACTUALLY LISTENING TO ME?
I AM ACTUALLY LISTENING...
I'M GLAD YOU DECIDED TO HELP ME WITH THIS, BUT YOU NEED TO BE 120% DEDICATED!
Y-YEAH, I KNOW.. I GET IT..

I'LL BE WALKING... AT THIS PACE.
NOW RIGHT HERE!!
HUH ?!!
...
..HER ASS...
LOOK HERE... SEE THE STICK ON THE GROUND ?
SEE ANOTHER ONE DOWN THERE. AND THEN THREE?
..YEAH, I SEE..

THE MAN PUSHES THE WOMAN'S BACK OVER AND JAMS HIS CROTCH INTO HER AT HYPER-SPEED!
WHEN I REACH THOSE STICKS, THAT'S THE CUE FOR YOUR APPEAR-ANCE.
Y... YEAH. WILD.
GOT IT? PERFECTLY CLEAR? YOU'RE GOING TO BE A WILD CHIMPAN-ZEE!
OKAY! LET'S GIVE IT A SHOT!
WE'RE DOING THAT THREE TIMES TOTAL
THEN HE RUNS TO THE TREE WITH THE TAPE WRAPPED AROUND IT AND MAKES HIS WAY BACK AROUND TO THE START, GOING BEHIND THE CAMERA.
GO AHEAD.
ONE QUES-TION FIRST!!
UH, QUES-TION!

SO.. AT THE PRACTICE STAGE, AM I STILL USING.. MR FAKE HERE..
TO UH, PENE-TRATE ?
AND, UH . IF IT'S GOING TO BE THAT SUDDEN, WELL..
WILL IT EVEN FIT?
..FOR THE PRACTICE, YOU WON'T STICK IT IN JUST PRE-TEND TO.
WHEN WE SHOOT THE REAL THING, I'VE GOT SOME LUBE FOR THAT PURPOSE THAT SHOULD MAKE SURE EVERYTHING'S SMOOTH.
I.. I SEE..
LUBE
YEP, LUBE.

HUFF FFF
PRACTICE RUN, START!
OKAY, HERE WE GO
That's right. Today...
...I will become a wild chimp!!
I... I am a chimpanzee...

OKAY, READY...
NOW !!
RIGHT!!
MWAAAAAAAH!

Gah—

HUH ?!!
YOU DON'T HAVE TO YELL "GAHH"

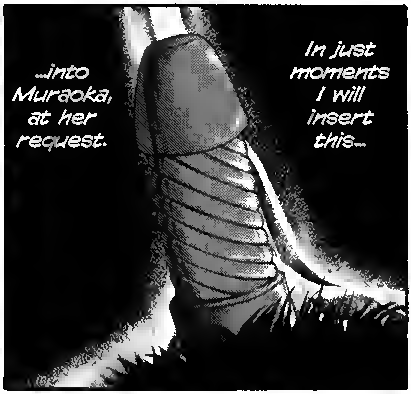
GAAAAAAHHHHHH!!

I HAVEN'T DECIDED WHAT TO DO ABOUT THE SOUND YET, SO WOULD YOU NOT SAY ANYTHING?
IF YOU'RE RUNNING OUT OF BREATH, JUST MAKE IT AS SMALL AS POSSIBLE..
O-OKAY... GOTCHA.
はあ
はあ
YOUR MOMENTUM IS GOOD, THOUGH
JUST DO IT LIKE THAT.
UH.. RIGHT!!
はあ
はあ
はあ
?
HMMM-MMM...
..WHA
WHAT'S WRONG?

...MAYBE I SHOULD HAVE YOU STICK IT IN ONCE.
WHAT?! AT THE PRAC-TICE STAGE ?
YEAH.
I'VE NEVER USED LUBE LIKE THAT. SO I AM NERVOUS, LIKE YOU SAID.
KIKUCHI SAYS ANYTHING WILL FIT IF YOU USE THAT STUFF, BUT..
A-ARE YOU SERI-OUS?! MURA-OKA!!
I NEED TO KNOW WHAT SORT OF FORCE I'M DEALING WITH
It's... It's not mine.
I'm not using... my own...

IT IS AAAHT !
AND MOST IMPOR-TANTLY, THIS IS NOT CHEAT-ING.

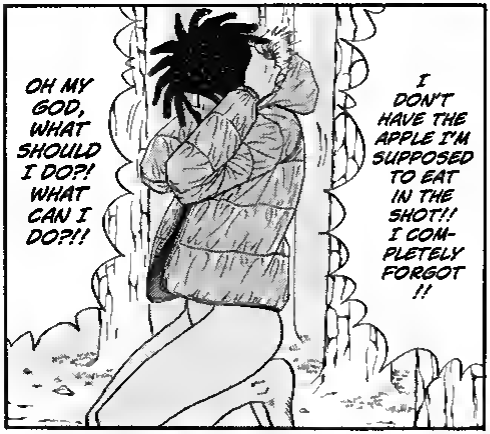
...is put-ting up a strong resistance. "This isn't funny!" "What do I do?" he asks.
Ouch... Oooh, ouchie... The real thing, pinched in tight in this wintry air.

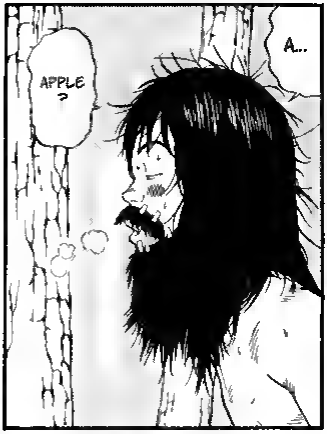

...into Muraoka, at her request.
In just moments I will insert this...

I DON'T HAVE THE APPLE !!

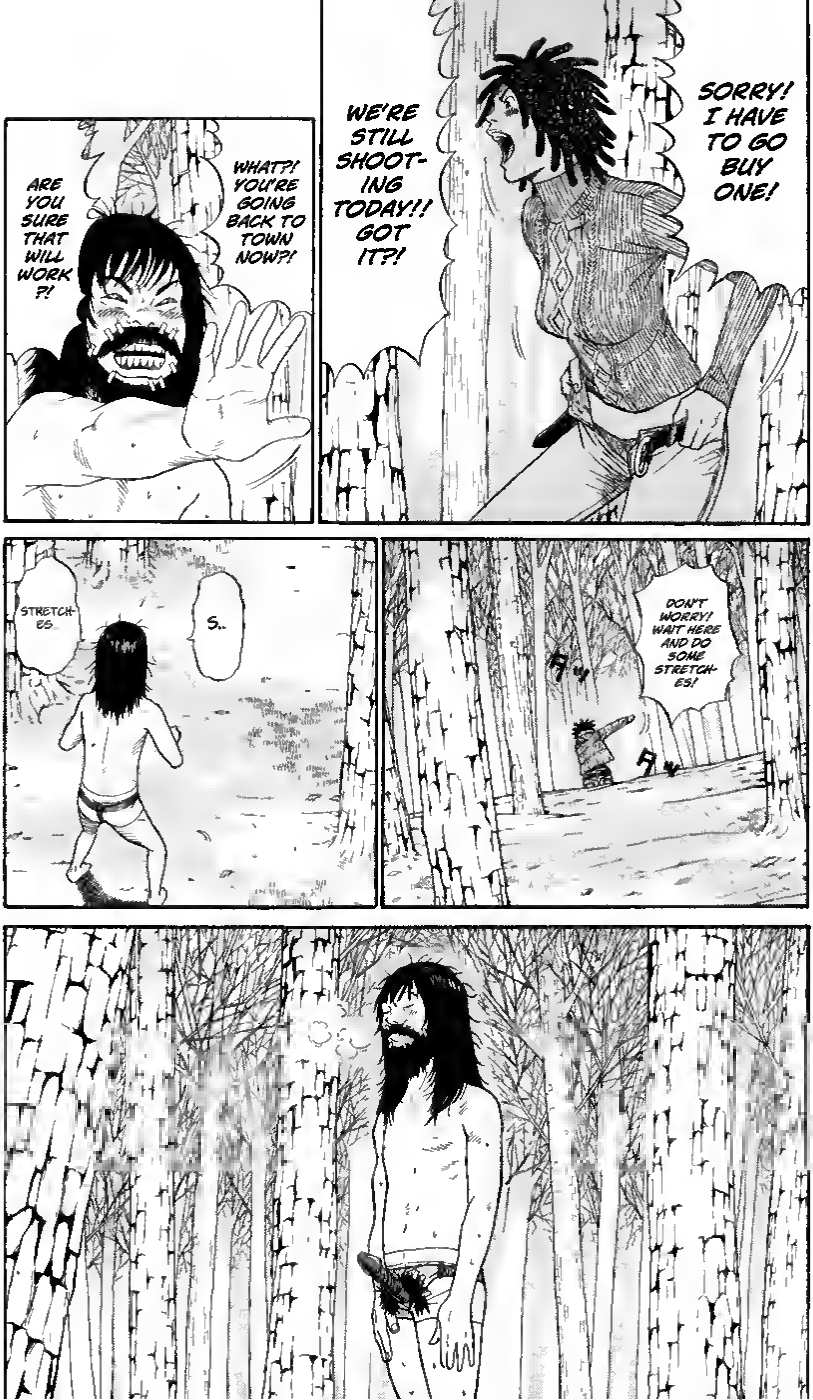
HMM ?!!
AAAAHH !!!

WHAT SHOULD I DO?! I FORGOT THE APPLE!!

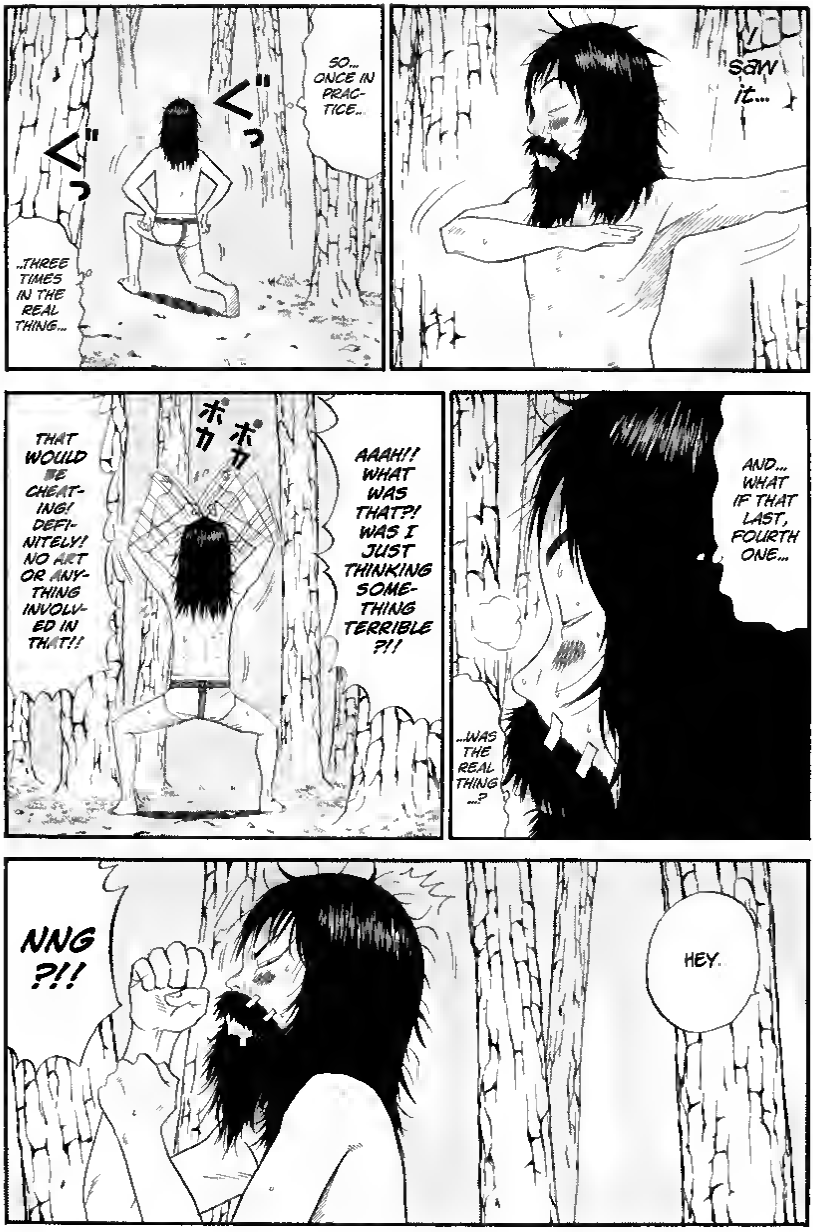

OH MY GOD, WHAT SHOULD I DO?! WHAT CAN I DO?!!
I DON'T HAVE THE APPLE I'M SUPPOSED TO EAT IN THE SHOT!! I COMPLETELY FORGOT !!


A...
APPLE ?

IT HAS A VERY IMPORTANT MEANING! IT HAS TO BE THERE!!
NO, NO, I NEED IT!!
UMM. I DON'T SEE WHY AN APPLE IS REALLY NECESSARY, BUT THAT'S JUST ME

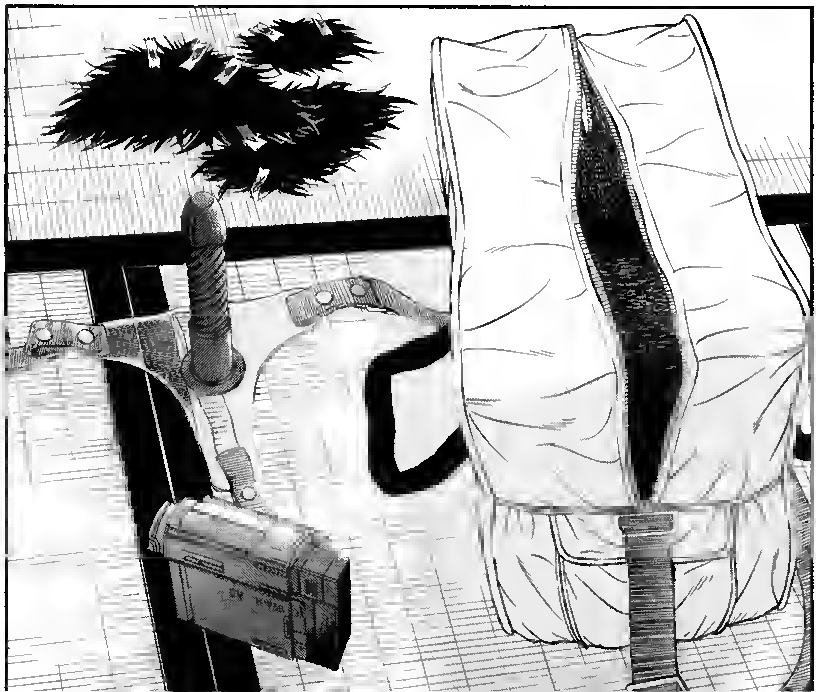

SORRY! I HAVE TO GO BUY ONE!
WE'RE STILL SHOOT-ING TODAY!! GOT IT?!
WHAT?! YOU'RE GOING BACK TO TOWN NOW?!
ARE YOU SURE THAT WILL WORK ?!
DON'T WORRY! WAIT HERE AND DO SOME STRETCH-ES!
S..
STRETCH-ES..

ㄱㅅ"
ㄱㅅ"
ㄱㅅ"
ㄱㅅ"
...I SAW IT...
.....
I saw her...


SAW IT...
SO... ONCE IN PRAC-TICE..
グっ
グっ
..THREE TIMES IN THE REAL THING...
AND... WHAT IF THAT LAST, FOURTH ONE...
...WAS THE REAL THING ...?
AAAH!! WHAT WAS THAT?! WAS I JUST THINKING SOME-THING TERRIBLE ?!!
ボカ
ボカ
THAT WOULD BE CHEAT-ING! DEFI-NITELY! NO ART OR ANY-THING INVOLV-ED IN THAT!!
HEY.
NNG ?!!

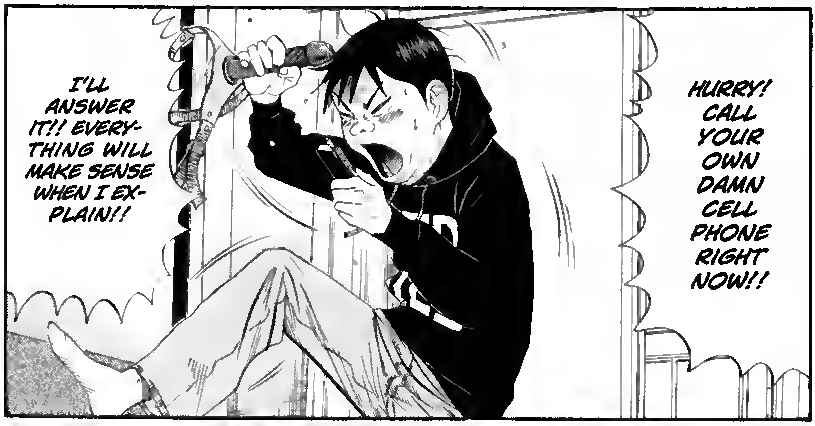
..YOU A BAD BOY?
..YOU THERE, SONNY
WE GOTTA CALL THE PO-LEASE !!
G-GET THE PHONE, DEAR!!

Chapter 65: No Problems



I CAME... BACK HOME.
Fortunately, even in my panic I still had the presence of mind to collect up all the supplies
...AND I CHICKENED OUT AND RAN ALL THE WAY HOME!!
I MADE THE SPLIT-SECOND DETERMINATION THAT THEY WOULD NOT UNDERSTAND ME...
I LOOKED FOR HER, TOO!! BUT I COULDN'T FIND HER AT ALL!!
SHE'S LOOKING FOR IT! SHE'S LOOKING FOR ME NOW!!
...but I really didn't expect that Muraoka's cell phone would be in the bag, too.

W- WHAT SHOULD I DO?! GO BACK TO THE MOUNTAINS AND LOOK FOR HER?!
BUT I DID! AND SINCE THAT DIDN'T WORK, I CAME BACK HOME, WHERE I CAN AT LEAST BE AVAILABLE BY THE PHONE!!
MURA-OKAAAAA! I'M NOT OUT IN THE MOUNTAINS ANY-MORE!!
COME BACK TO MEEE! SENSE THE EMERGENCY THAT HAS UNFOLDED!


HURRY! CALL YOUR OWN DAMN CELL PHONE RIGHT NOW!!
I'LL ANSWER IT!! EVERY-THING WILL MAKE SENSE WHEN I EX-PLAIN!!

YUUUUSU-KEEE...
WHAT ?!!

NAGUMO'S HERE TO SEE YOUUUU!

WHAAA ?!!

WELL, COME ON IN, DEAR.
THANK YOU, MA'AM.
NAGUMO'S HERE?! WHY IS SHE HERE?!
OH FUCK!! FUCK FUCK FUCK! WHAT NOW?!
OH MY GOD!! IT'S ALL OVER!! THE WORLD IS END-ING!!
DAMMIT!! GET IN THERE!!
CLICK
...HELLLLL- EWWW.

HELLL-
EWW.
..HUH..
はあ
はあ

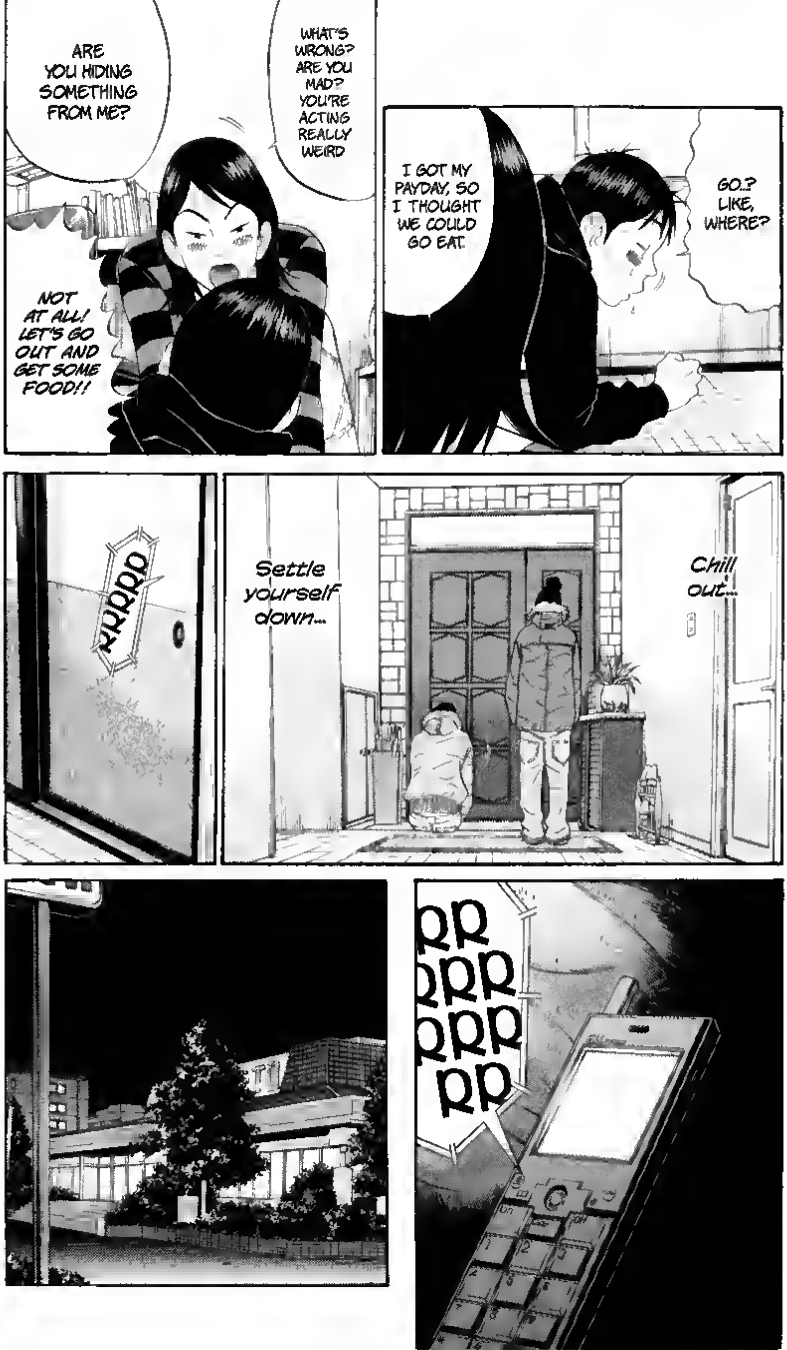
I WAS
JUST..
EXERCIS-
ING
HUH?
..OH..

...WHAT'S
UP?
WHY
ARE YOU
OUT OF
BREATH?

AND..
WERE
YOU JUST
SCREAMING
IN HERE
ABOUT
SOME-
THING?
I.. I
WASN'T..
TECHNI-
CALLY
SPEAK-
ING.

OOOH.
LIKE
SO!
LIKE
THIS!
OOH!
OOH!

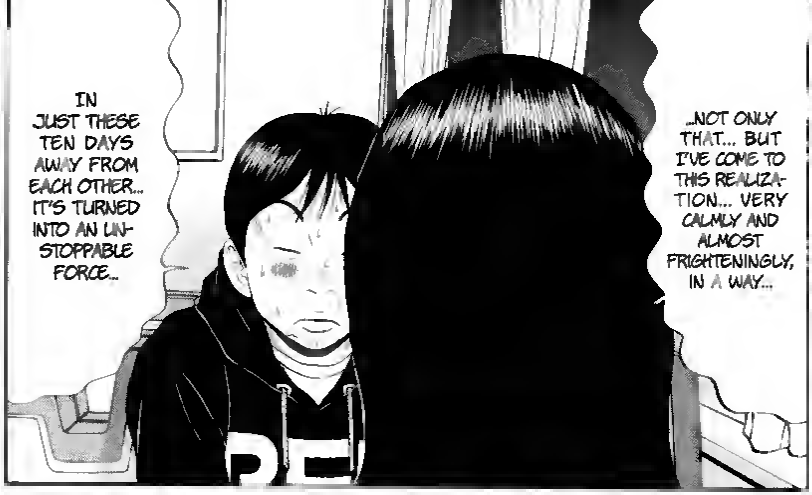
W- WHAT'S WITH THE SUDDEN VISIT?
DID WE HAVE PLANS?
DO I HAVE TO HAVE PLANS TO SEE YOU?
UH, NO. IT'S PERFECTLY FINE...
AS IT HAPPENS, FOR THE LAST SEVERAL DAYS . I'VE BEEN UNABLE TO REACH MY BOYFRIEND, WHO IS WITHOUT A CELLPHONE .
AND SO I DECIDED I WOULD JUST DROP BY TO SEE HIM.
SO, WHAT'S UP? WANT TO GO SOMEWHERE?
HUH?
D- DON'T RING! DON'T YOU DARE RING RIGHT NOW!!


ARE YOU HIDING SOMETHING FROM ME?
WHAT'S WRONG? ARE YOU MAD? YOU'RE ACTING REALLY WEIRD
NOT AT ALL! LET'S GO OUT AND GET SOME FOOD!!
I GOT MY PAYDAY, SO I THOUGHT WE COULD GO EAT.
GO..? LIKE, WHERE?
KNOCK
Settle yourself down...
Chill out...
RRRR
RRR
RRR
RR

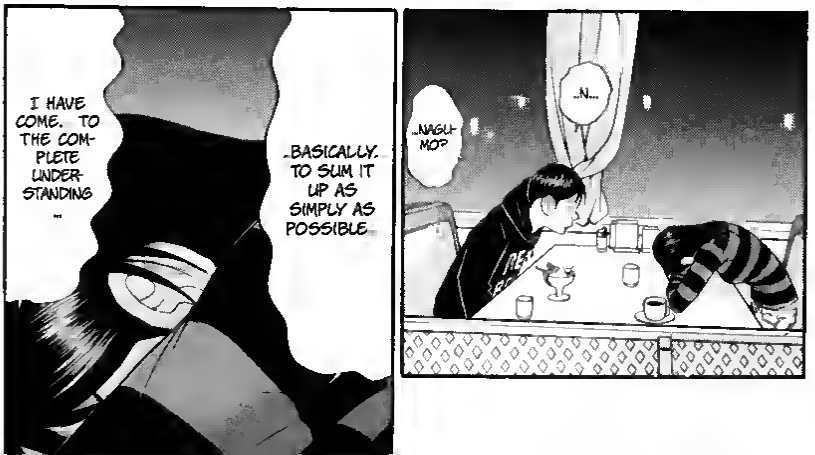
...
What is this terrifying, unprecedented atmosphere between us?!
...
What is this?
It's possible!! QUITE possible!!!
I was walking all over town with Muraoka. What if Nagumo saw us and!..
C-COULD IT BE?! DOES SHE KNOW?!
CAN NAGUMO POSSIBLY KNOW OF THE HIDDEN HORROR?!!

WE HAVEN'T SEEN EACH OTHER AT ALL LATELY
FOR ALMOST TEN DAYS
Y... YEAH..
YOU DIDN'T CALL ME EVEN ONCE... AND YOU'RE NEVER AT HOME...
...YEAH
...I'M SORRY...
SO...
IS THIS SOME PLAN OF YOURS?
HUH?!
AT FIRST, I WAS STUBBORN AND DECIDED NOT TO CALL YOU, EITHER
IS THIS SOME GAME YOU'RE PLAYING TO MAKE ME REALIZE "HOW IMPORTANT YOU ARE"?

W-WHA—!! NO, NEVER!
I WOULD NEVER THINK OF SUCH A THING!!
THE LAST TEN DAYS, I'VE BEEN SITTING AROUND AND THINKING THINGS OVER...
LIKE, REALLY, DEEPLY THINKING... FAR MORE THAN I EVER WOULD HAVE BELIEVED...
AND SO I DECIDED... THAT THERE WAS SOMETHING I REALLY WANTED TO TELL YOU.
IT'S OKAY... IF YOU THINK IT'S CREEPY OR SCARY... JUST TRY NOT TO SAY SO...
UH... OKAY...
..OGINO... I AM IN LOVE WITH YOU...
...FAR MORE THAN YOU CAN POSSIBLY IMAGINE.


IN JUST THESE TEN DAYS AWAY FROM EACH OTHER... IT'S TURNED INTO AN UNSTOPPABLE FORCE..
..NOT ONLY THAT... BUT I'VE COME TO THIS REALIZATION... VERY CALMLY AND ALMOST FRIGHTENINGLY, IN A WAY...

GWAAAH!!
AND BESIDES, WE'RE NOT BREAKING UP! IT'S COMPLETELY IMPOSSIBLE!!
BUT, YOU KNOW WHAT? IT'S OKAY! IF WE EVER BREAK UP, I WON'T TURN INTO A STALKER! IT WILL BE ALL RIGHT!!


I HAVE COME. TO THE COMPLETE UNDERSTANDING ..
..BASICALLY. TO SUM IT UP AS SIMPLY AS POSSIBLE..
..NAGU! MO?
..N...

...THAT I CANNOT HANDLE A LIFE WITHOUT YOU ...
AND I HOPE WE'LL STAY TOGETHER...
WELL? ARE YOU FEELING GROSSED OUT RIGHT NOW? AM I BEING WEIRD?
N-NO... NOT AT ALL.
...IF I HAD TO GO FURTHER...
YES? TO GO FURTHER?
...IF I HAD TO GO FURTHER... ONCE YOU'RE OUT OF COLLEGE...
...AND WE'RE BOTH WORKING ADULTS...

...
...WHEN WE'RE BOTH, WORKING ADULTS?
...WE'LL BE PART OF THE WORK-FORCE...
W-WELL, ANYWAYS! LET'S BE CLOSER THAN EVER, OKAY?! AND CALL ME SOMETIME, WOULD YOU?!
IS THAT CLEAR?!
Y-YEAH, I HEAR YOU...

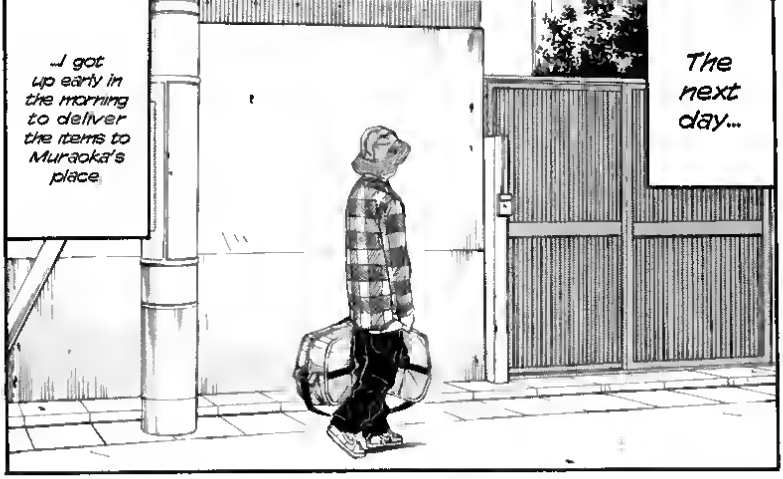
"Let's get married"...?

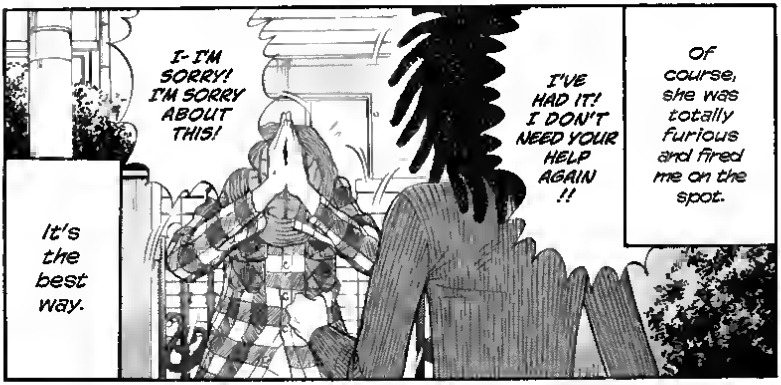
Nagumo...

Is that what she was about to say?

...you were here, thinking of...
While I was wearing a strap-on and running naked through the freezing mountains...

...
...IT COULD...
THIS IS MY FAULT!! I'M SUCH A TERRIBLE PERSON!
AAAA-AAH! I'M SORRY! I'M SO SORRY!!
Of a ronin and a college student... who have been together for two years...
It could just be... the blabberings of young, naive people...
...that I had decided... on the whole "when we're both working adults" part...
After all, it was long, long ago...
But that's all right...
Because to tell you the truth, I wasn't that surprised.


...I got up early in the morning to deliver the items to Muraoka's place.
The next day...


I- I'M SORRY! I'M SORRY ABOUT THIS!
I'VE HAD IT! I DON'T NEED YOUR HELP AGAIN !!
Of course, she was totally furious and fired me on the spot.
It's the best way.

...I am the #1 Man Most Likely to Make Nagumo Happy...

At the present time...

In the ranks of men born to provide Nagumo with a life of joy and happiness...
I AM NUMBER ONE!!!

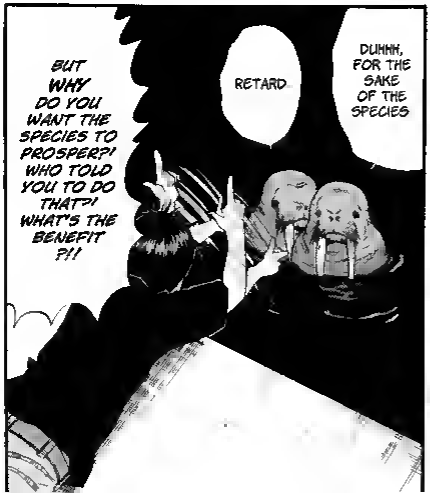
Y- YOU DO IT. HE SCARES ME
GO.. GO GET THE BALL
GOTTA PROTECT THE CROWN !!

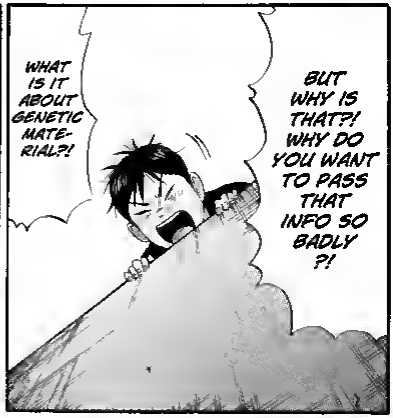
Chapter 66: Problems of the Past

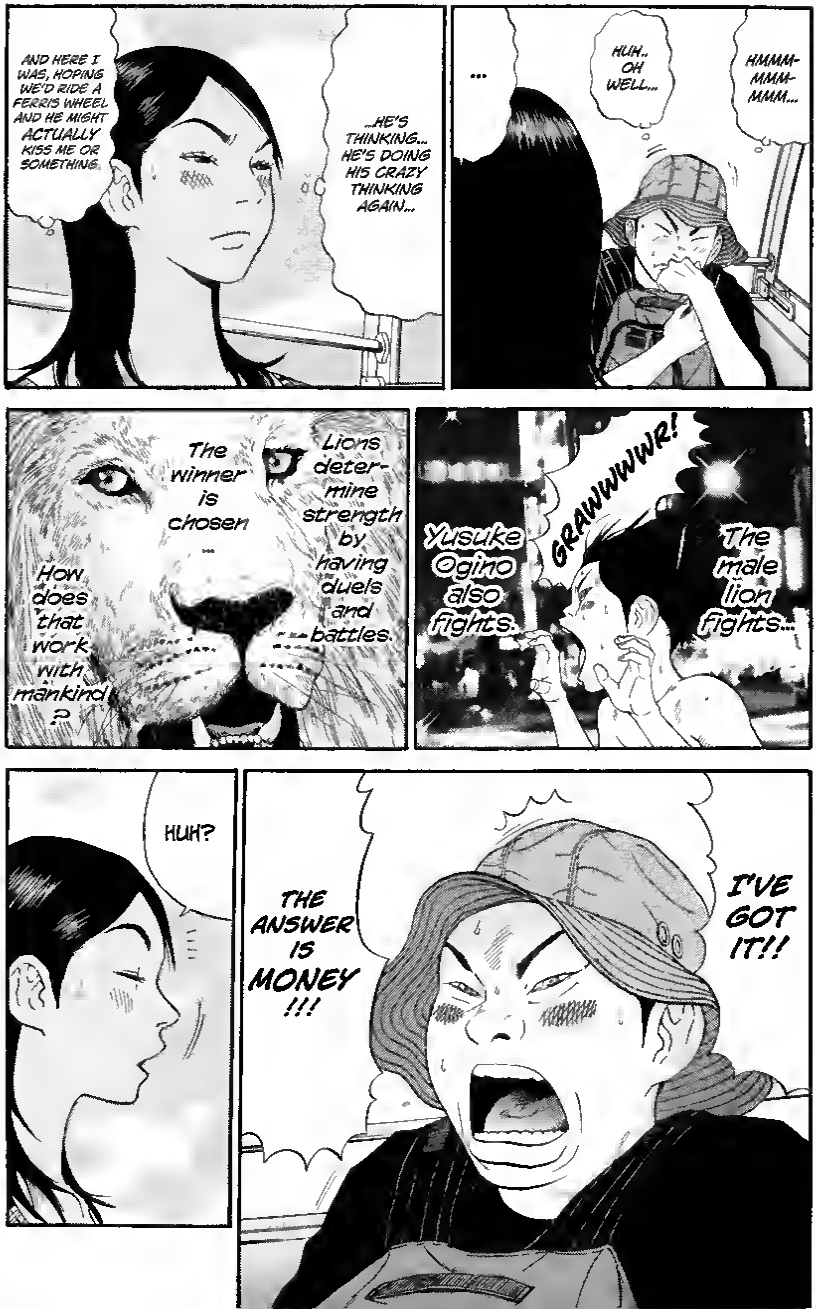
THE FIRST TIME I HAD SEX...
14
...
...THE FIRST TIME I HAD SEX... FOR AN INSTANT ...
...MY BRAIN HAD SOME CRAZY THOUGHT, LIKE, "IS THIS WHAT EVERYONE LIVES FOR?!"

That genetic material you want to pass along so much, you'd change the place you live and the shape you come in to do it!!!
DON'T EVEN FEEL LIKE EATING, DO YOU ?!
Hedgehog
WHAT DO YOU THINK? CAN'T EVEN EAT, CAN YOU?!
How could the act of passing along one's genetic material feel so damn good?

And the females do the very best they can to find the best male. Every passing day.
Males try to be as strong as possible, so that females choose them.

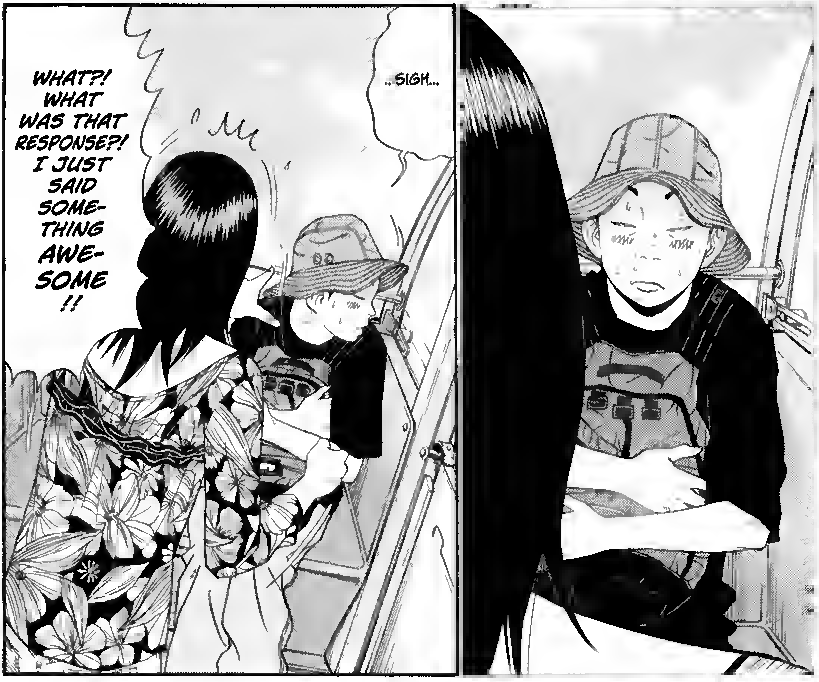

BUT WHY DO YOU WANT THE SPECIES TO PROSPER?! WHO TOLD YOU TO DO THAT?! WHAT'S THE BENEFIT ?!!
RETARD
DUHHH, FOR THE SAKE OF THE SPECIES


WHAT IS IT ABOUT GENETIC MATE-RIAL?!
BUT WHY IS THAT?! WHY DO YOU WANT TO PASS THAT INFO SO BADLY ?!


AND HERE I WAS, HOPING WE'D RIDE A FERRIS WHEEL AND HE MIGHT ACTUALLY KISS ME OR SOMETHING.
...HE'S THINKING... HE'S DOING HIS CRAZY THINKING AGAIN...
...
HUH.. OH WELL...
HMMM-MMM-MMM...
The winner is chosen ...
Lions determine strength by having duels and battles.
How does that work with mankind ?
GRAWWWR!
Yusuke Ogino also fights.
The male lion fights...
HUH?
THE ANSWER IS MONEY !!!
I'VE GOT IT!!

..UHHHHHH.. ARE YOU GIVING ME THE "A MAN'S WORTH IS IN HIS WEALTH" LECTURE?
WORK IS HUNTING, AND THE MAN WHO CAN HUNT HAS THE STRONGEST GENES! THE WOMEN CHOOSE HIM!!
IT JUST MEANS THAT THE PREY CAUGHT IN THE HUNT HAS TURNED TO MONEY! THE GAME IS THE SAME AS IT WAS IN THE STONE AGE!!
I CAN'T DENY THAT THERE A WOMEN WHO THINK SO... QUITE A LOT OF THEM.
IS IT TRUE?
..WELL..
MONEY IS A NECESSARY THING, BUT IT ISN'T EVERYTHING IT'S PRETTY FAR DOWN ON MY LIST OF PRIORITIES.
..WHAT'S NUMBER ONE, THEN? WHAT DO YOU WANT?
WHEN IT COMES DOWN TO IT... ARE YOU ALL ABOUT MONEY?
..AND WHAT ABOUT YOU, NAGUMO?

LOVE.

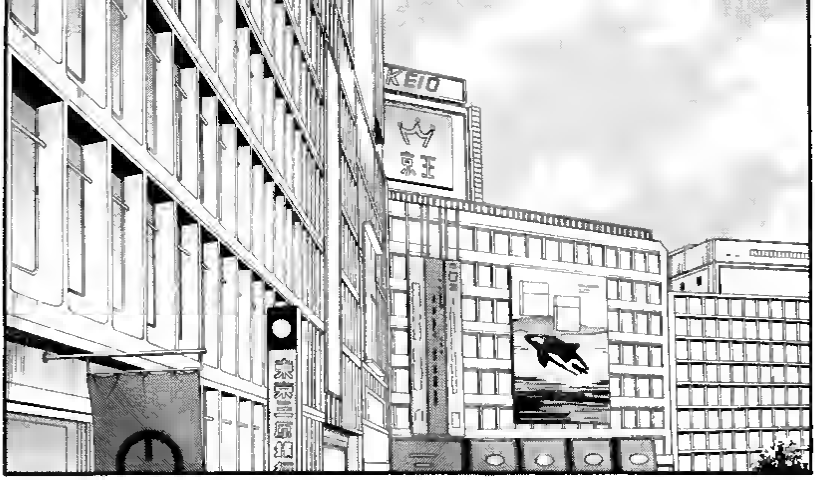

WHAT?! WHAT WAS THAT RESPONSE?! I JUST SAID SOME-THING AWE-SOME !!
..SIGH...

OHH ?!!
I WON'T.
WELL... AS LONG AS SHE NEVER CHANGES HER MIND ABOUT THAT...
HEH HEH HEH.. I KNOW YOU BETTER THAN ANYONE ELSE IN THE UNIVERSE.
B-BUT HOW?! HOW DID SHE KNOW WHAT I'M THINK-ING?!
THIS IS MY NATURE. IT DOESN'T CHANGE BY THE DAY.
SHE'S LIKE... SNORTING AT ME... IT'S KIND OF DIRTY...
HEH HEH...
AND I'M TOTALLY IN LOVE WITH YOU, YUSUKE OGINO.

...I'll never be a rich man.
宝くじ
I think it's safe to say that unless a miracle happens...

...and trying to do the best with what I've got...
I'm going to prep school...
That's why I'm working hard.

I SAW THEM DO IT!!
OH! THOSE PEOPLE OVER THERE JUST KISSED!
...that I can make this girl mostly happy.
In the vain hope...


KEIO

NO, YOU'RE JUST NOT GETTING ENOUGH EXERCISE
I THINK THAT HILL IS STRENGTH-ENING YOUR LEGS. CAN YOU TELL?

OHHHH, MY FEET ARE KILLING ME.. CAN WE TAKE A BREAK?
SHIFT

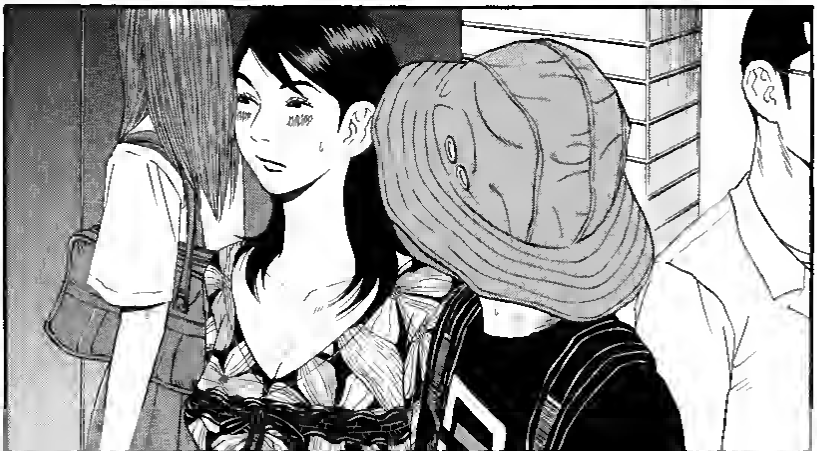
OH!

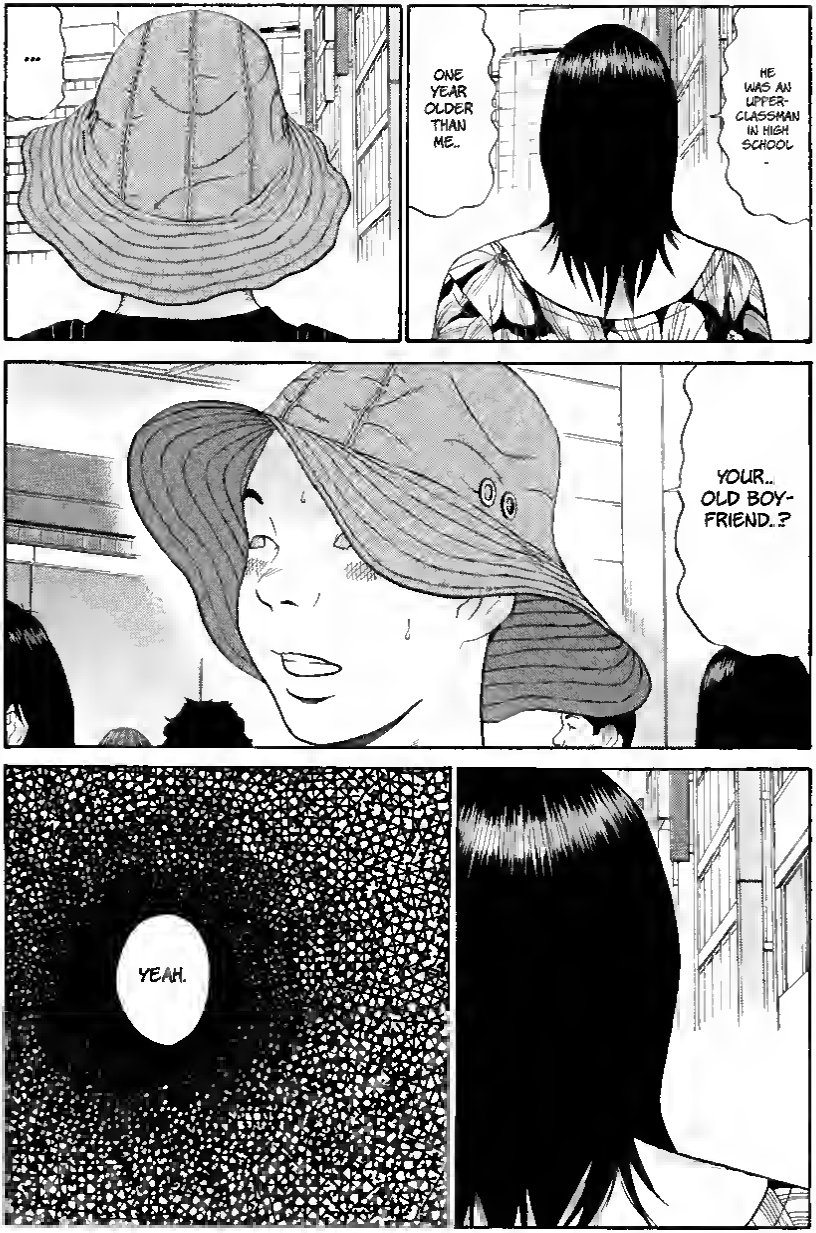
OH!!

LONG TIME NO SEE...
...YO...
YEAH... NO KIDDING..
YEP. I'M A STUDENT.
...UMM, SO...
OH YEAH! ARE YOU IN COLLEGE NOW?

...YEAH..?
I MET, UH... WHAT'S HER NAME THE OTHER DAY TAJIMA, I THINK?

YEAH..
UHHH, WELL... I'VE GOT TO GET TO WORK SOON... NICE SEEING YOU

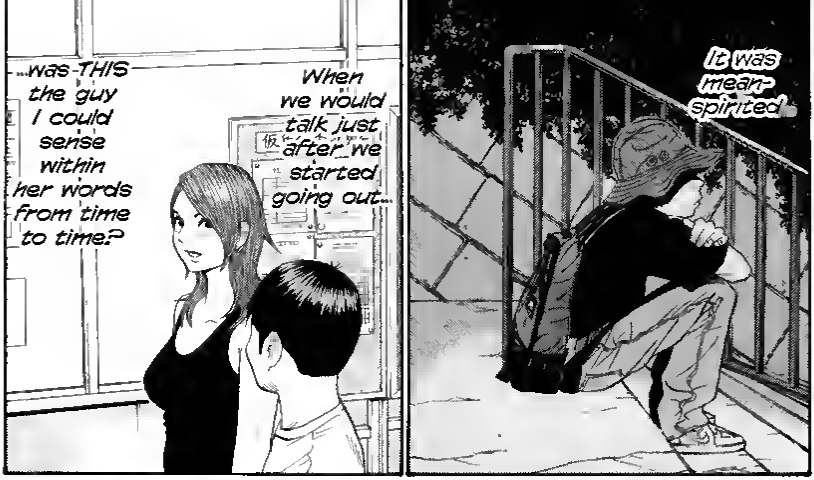



...
ONE YEAR OLDER THAN ME..
HE WAS AN UPPER-CLASSMAN IN HIGH SCHOOL
YOUR.. OLD BOY-FRIEND..?
YEAH.

Why did
I ask?

I saw her
flustered
like that...

...and I knew
at once.
Why did
I ask?


...was THIS the guy I could sense within her words from time to time?
When we would talk just after we started going out...
It was mean-spirited...

The day we shared our first kiss...

...I was blown out of my mind, but also a bit depressed.
And the day we first had sex...

SHE HAD ALREADY DONE THOSE THINGS...
...WITH HER PREVIOUS BOYFRIEND...

"What's the problem with that?"
"It's not like worrying about that is going to change anything."
...but it popped in front of my eyes today.
...I tried to bury the thoughts. It was a problem that should have been forgotten long ago...

WHEN I WAS A JUNIOR WE WENT OUT FOR JUST A MONTH...
...HUH?
WHEN I WAS A JUNIOR...
...to do all that with him?
So it took you just one month...
Hell, What if...
...that guy's still in love with Nagumo?
Aaahh! Enough!! Stop it!!
Or maybe it was someone else...

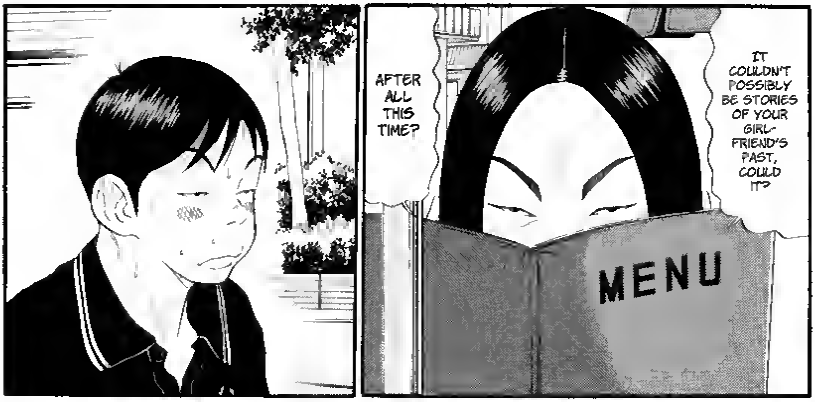
Chapter 67: Unchewable

カン
TWAH!
ラン
HA-YAA!
?
FLOP
ONE MONTH...
0...

YAAH!
...who took no time at all in becoming my everything...
This girl, Yumi Nagumo...
S-SORRY I'LL PLAY
NOT ACTUALLY INTERESTED?
WHAT'S UP? WHAT WAS THAT?
WHAT WAS THE PROBLEM ?!
...broke up with that guy...
in just a single month
HAZY!!
YAH! GO AWAY!
WHAT IS THIS ?!
VERRRY, VERRRY, VERRRY...
I feel hazy...
YAH!
YAH!
Urgh... Hrrrrg!

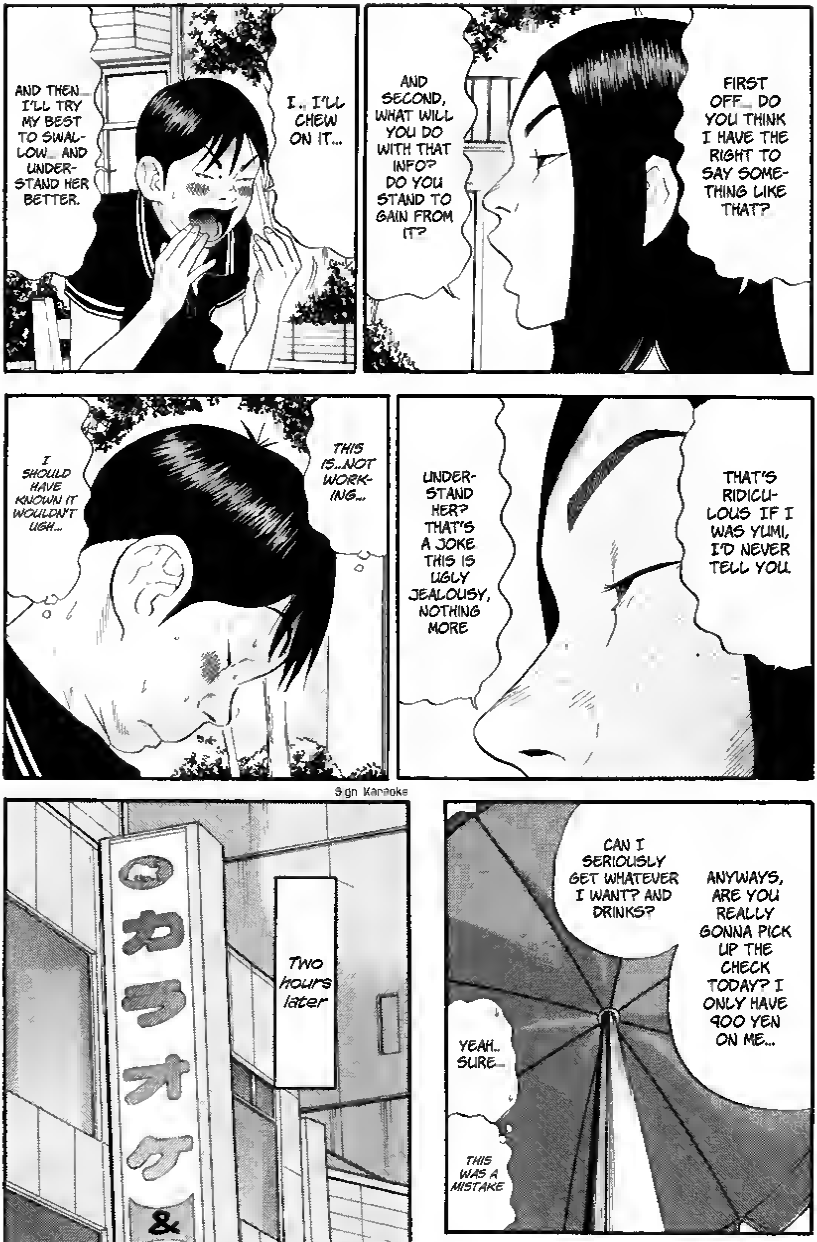
...is burning a hole through my brain.
And now the prospect of all that other useless and mournful info...
four days ago.
This is bad... I learned something I had no interest in ever knowing...
Just one single month...
In one month...
Of course, I don't have the courage to ask her.
WHY ?!!
WELL, HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN?

WHAT COULD YOU POSSIBLY WISH TO ASK ME, YOUR NATURAL ENEMY?
SOOOO-OOOO...


AFTER ALL THIS TIME?
IT COULDN'T POSSIBLY BE STORIES OF YOUR GIRL-FRIEND'S PAST, COULD IT?
MENU

WE WERE JUST WALKING AROUND TOWN...
SEE... FOUR DAYS AGO...
I THOUGHT SO.
BINGO ...

OH.. WELL, WHAT DOES IT MATTER THAT HE EXISTS? ARE YOU GONNA SAY HE SHOULDN'T ?
NO, THAT'S FINE.. IT'S PERFECTLY FINE THAT SHE HAD A BOYFRIEND BEFORE ME.
..AND WE RAN INTO HER EX-BOY-FRIEND.
MENU
...IS WHY THEY WOULD BREAK UP AFTER JUST A SINGLE MONTH...
THE THING THAT I JUST CAN'T FIGURE OUT OR GET OVER...
SO THIS IS THE FACE OF SOMEONE WHOM JEALOUSY HAS DRIV-EN TO MADNESS! YOU LEARN SOMETHING NEW EVERY DAY!
OH MY GOD! SUCH HIDEOUS-NESS LIKE I'VE NEVER SEEN!!
BECAUSE I CAN'T! WHY ELSE WOULD I ASK YOU?!
YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT? WHY NOT ASK HER?
YOU THINK IT'S TOO SHORT? AND YOU WANT TO KNOW WHY?
MENU

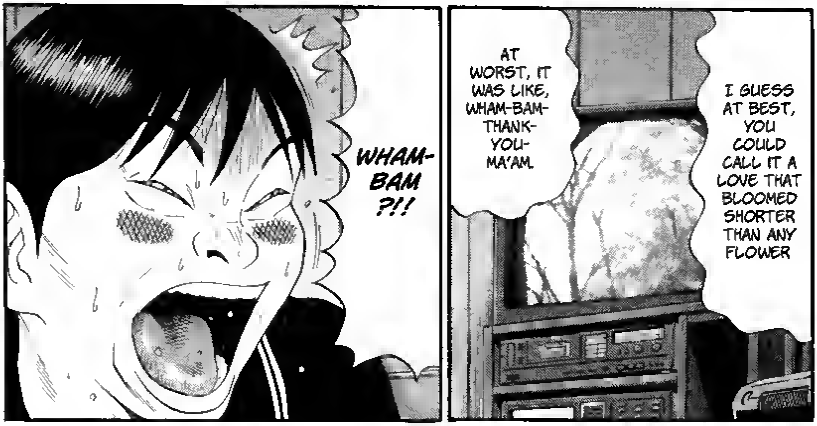

FIRST OFF... DO YOU THINK I HAVE THE RIGHT TO SAY SOMETHING LIKE THAT?
AND SECOND, WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH THAT INFO? DO YOU STAND TO GAIN FROM IT?
I.. I'LL CHEW ON IT...
AND THEN I'LL TRY MY BEST TO SWALLOW... AND UNDERSTAND HER BETTER.
THAT'S RIDICULOUS IF I WAS YUMI, I'D NEVER TELL YOU
UNDERSTAND HER? THAT'S A JOKE THIS IS UGLY JEALOUSY, NOTHING MORE
THIS IS..NOT WORKING...
I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN IT WOULDN'T UGH...
Sign Karaoke
ANYWAYS, ARE YOU REALLY GONNA PICK UP THE CHECK TODAY? I ONLY HAVE 900 YEN ON ME...
CAN I SERIOUSLY GET WHATEVER I WANT? AND DRINKS?
YEAH.. SURE...
THIS WAS A MISTAKE
Two hours later
カラオケ
&

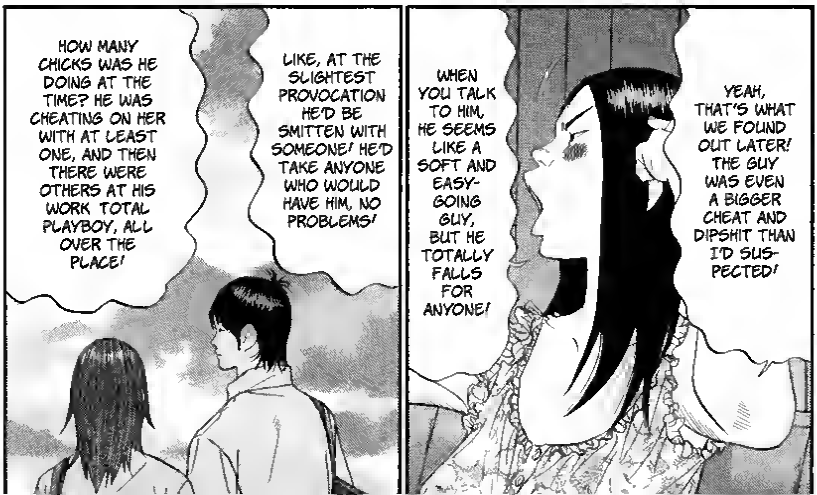
YUMI REALLY DIDN'T HAVE VERY GOOD TASTE IN MEN!!
STILL DOESN'T, IF YOU ASK ME
SO, WHAT WOULD YOU CALL IT? SHE JUST SORT OF GOT SWEPT AWAY, THAT'S ALL!

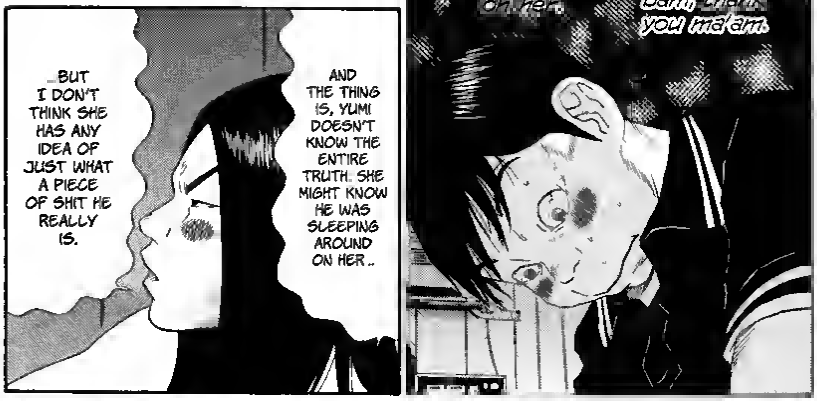
LIKE, THEY WOULD LITERALLY SEND LETTERS FULL OF CURSES STRAIGHT TO HER HOUSE AND EVERY-THING!
AND YUMI CAUGHT SOME MEGA FLAK FOR IT! ALL THE OLDER BAD GIRLS SINGLED HER OUT! ALL BECAUSE HE ASKED HER OUT AND SHE SAID YES.

I ALWAYS THOUGHT HE WAS A BIT OF A CREEP, AND I TOLD HER SO, BUT OH WELL.
THIS GUY'S NAME WAS SHIBA, AND HE WAS A BIG DEAL.

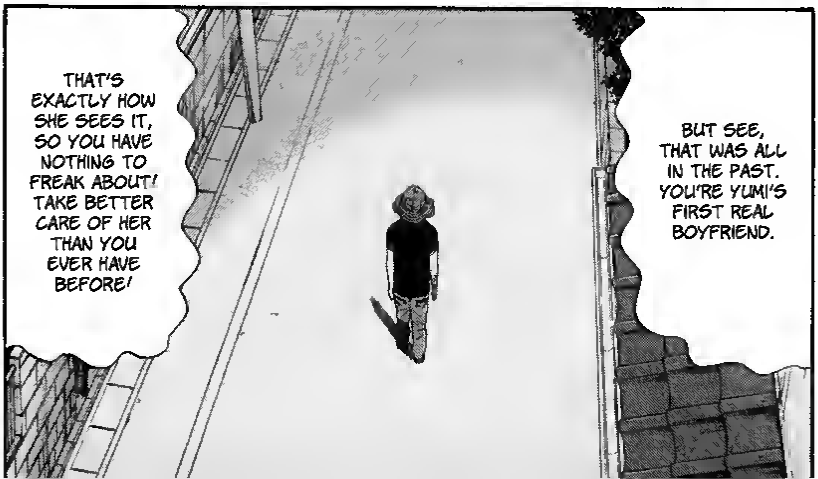
AND THE THING IS, I DON'T THINK YUMI EVEN REALLY LIKED HIM ALL THAT MUCH!
SHE EVEN SAID, "I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT"! SHE SAID, "THAT DOESN'T EVEN COUNT AS GOING OUT!"


I GUESS AT BEST, YOU COULD CALL IT A LOVE THAT BLOOMED SHORTER THAN ANY FLOWER
AT WORST, IT WAS LIKE, WHAM-BAM-THANK-YOU-MA'AM.
WHAM-BAM ?!!

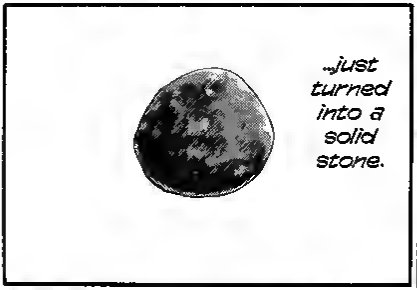

YEAH, THAT'S WHAT WE FOUND OUT LATER! THE GUY WAS EVEN A BIGGER CHEAT AND DIPSHIT THAN I'D SUSPECTED!
WHEN YOU TALK TO HIM, HE SEEMS LIKE A SOFT AND EASY-GOING GUY, BUT HE TOTALLY FALLS FOR ANYONE!
LIKE, AT THE SLIGHTEST PROVOCATION HE'D BE SMITTEN WITH SOMEONE! HE'D TAKE ANYONE WHO WOULD HAVE HIM, NO PROBLEMS!
HOW MANY CHICKS WAS HE DOING AT THE TIME? HE WAS CHEATING ON HER WITH AT LEAST ONE, AND THEN THERE WERE OTHERS AT HIS WORK TOTAL PLAYBOY, ALL OVER THE PLACE!


Speaking of her...
W-Nabe-bam, thank you ma'am.
AND THE THING IS, YUMI DOESN'T KNOW THE ENTIRE TRUTH. SHE MIGHT KNOW HE WAS SLEEPING AROUND ON HER..
...BUT I DON'T THINK SHE HAS ANY IDEA OF JUST WHAT A PIECE OF SHIT HE REALLY IS.

SO DON'T YOU DARE TELL HER! IF YOU DO, I'M GOING TO KILL YOU!!
I'LL MARRY A YAKUZA JUST SO I CAN TELL HIM TO DO YOU IN!!
ARE WE CLEAR ON THAT ?!
Y-YES... VERY...


BUT SEE, THAT WAS ALL IN THE PAST. YOU'RE YUMI'S FIRST REAL BOYFRIEND.
THAT'S EXACTLY HOW SHE SEES IT, SO YOU HAVE NOTHING TO FREAK ABOUT! TAKE BETTER CARE OF HER THAN YOU EVER HAVE BEFORE!

I'VE BEEN GORED ...
LIKE SOME-THING CARVED A HUGE CHUNK OUT OF ME.


...just turned into a solid stone.

All that hazy mist I've been feeling the last four days...

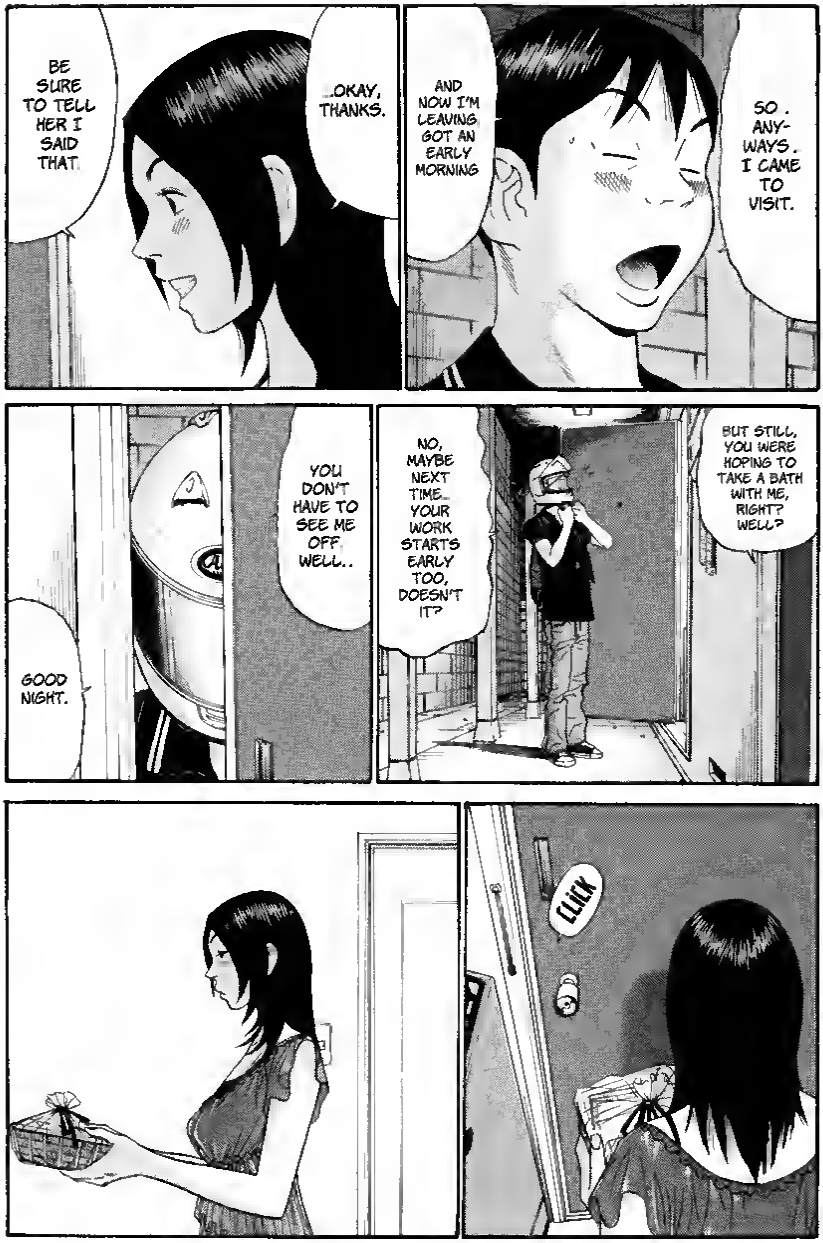
I can't chew thiiis!
No... It's too haaaaard!

Weren't you gonna take a nice big bite and gulp it down?
Well, Sunny Jim? What's wrong?
MILK

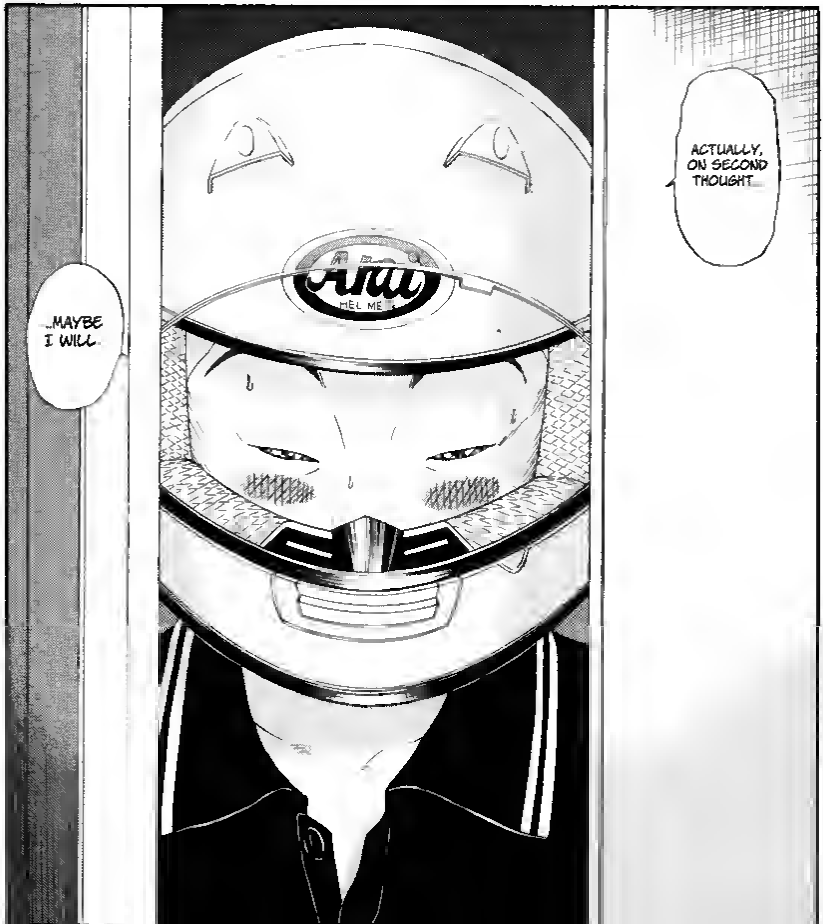
...can't swallow it...
And I cer-tainly...

HEEEEY! OGINO! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

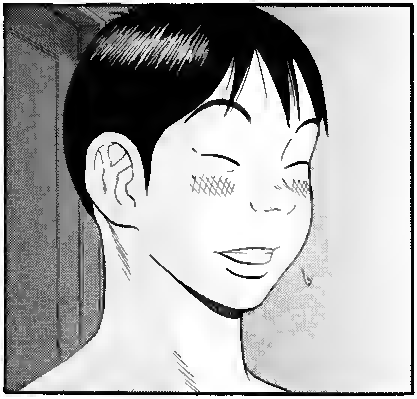
H-HEY... GOOD EVENING, MADAMS!
YOU SCARED ME! I THOUGHT IT WAS SOMEONE DANGEROUS PRESSING MY BUTTON
APPARENTLY SHE WENT TO A HOT SPRING.
HERE, IT'S A PRESENT FROM MY MOM.
NO, IT'S COOL, I JUST WANTED TO DROP BY—
YOU COULD HAVE CALLED, YOU KNOW. COME ON IN!
N-NO, NO! I WAS GONNA GO FOR A RIDE AND MY MOM GAVE THIS TO ME, SO...
HUH? WAIT, DID YOU BRING THIS OVER ON YOUR BIKE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT, THINKING WE'D USE IT IN THE BATH TOGETHER?
THANKS! I'LL START USING IT TONIGHT.
OH MY GOD, IT'S A BATH SET!


SO. ANY-WAYS. I CAME TO VISIT.
AND NOW I'M LEAVING. GOT AN EARLY MORNING
...OKAY, THANKS.
BE SURE TO TELL HER I SAID THAT.
BUT STILL, YOU WERE HOPING TO TAKE A BATH WITH ME, RIGHT? WELL?
NO, MAYBE NEXT TIME... YOUR WORK STARTS EARLY TOO, DOESN'T IT?
YOU DON'T HAVE TO SEE ME OFF. WELL..
GOOD NIGHT.
CLICK

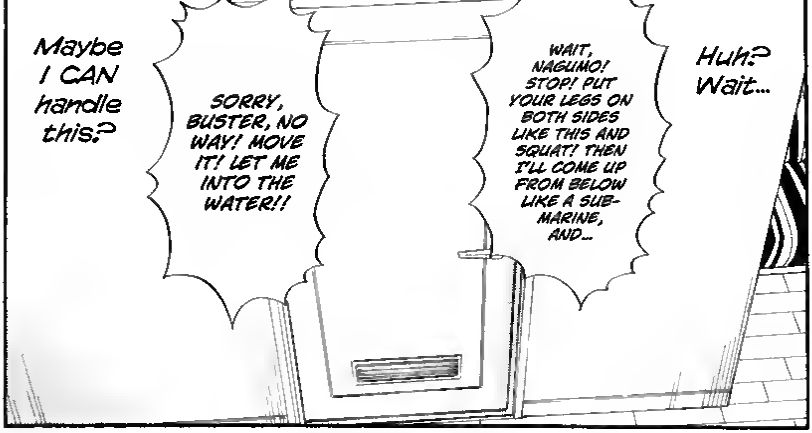
CLICK
HE'S SUCH AN IDIOT...
IS HE STILL WORRIED ABOUT THAT?

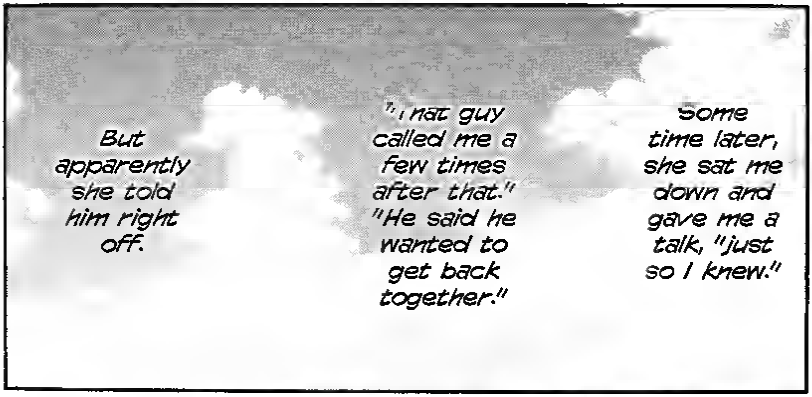

...MAYBE I WILL...
ACTUALLY, ON SECOND THOUGHT...

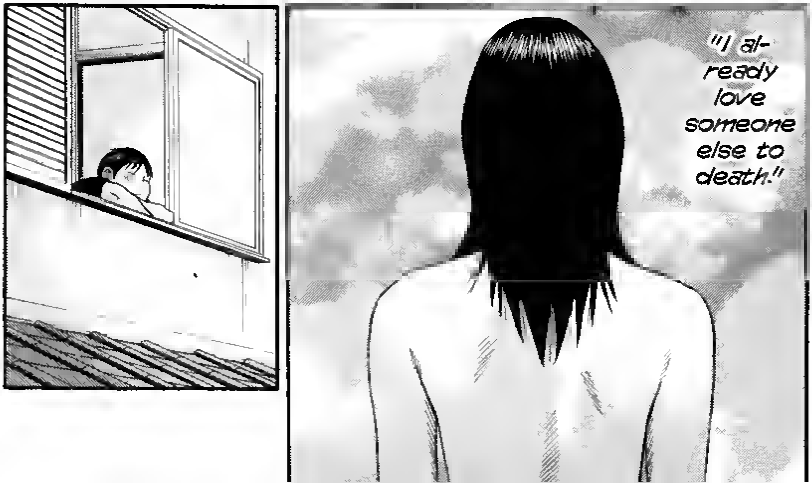
SO, WHICH ONE WILL WE USE?
HSSSSH
LET'S SEE... HOW ABOUT THE PURPLE ONE.
PLOP
OOOO-OOOH!



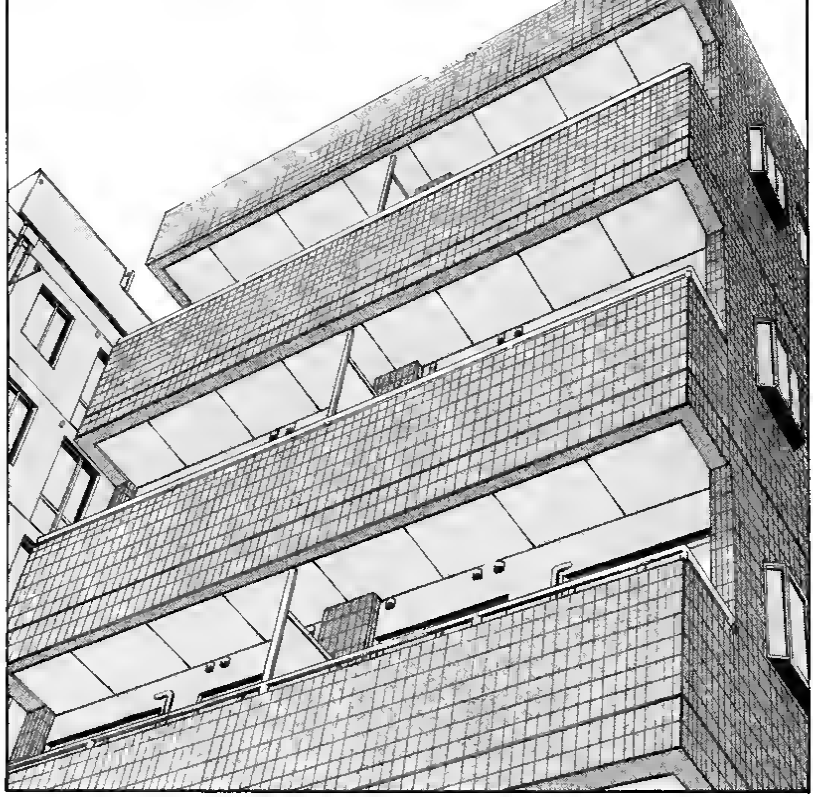
Oh.


Maybe I CAN handle this?
SORRY, BUSTER, NO WAY! MOVE IT! LET ME INTO THE WATER!!
WAIT, NAGUMO! STOP! PUT YOUR LEGS ON BOTH SIDES LIKE THIS AND SQUAT! THEN I'LL COME UP FROM BELOW LIKE A SUB-MARINE, AND...
Huh? Wait...


But apparently she told him right off.
"...that guy called me a few times after that." "He said he wanted to get back together."
Some time later, she sat me down and gave me a talk, "just so I knew."


"I al-ready love someone else to death."

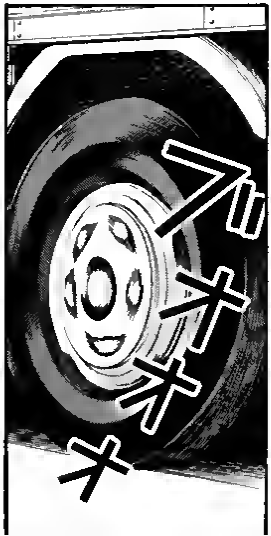
Chapter 68: Daily Evolution



HELLOOOO? THIS IS TANIMAKI
CLICK
SORRY ABOUT THIS I SLEPT IN ON ACCIDENT

YAWWWN
NAW, I'M TAKIN' AZUMA'S CAR. YEAH, THE HUGE ONE
YEAH... I'LL BE RIGHT OVER...

ISN'T THIS LOVELY WEATHER ?
IT SURE IS

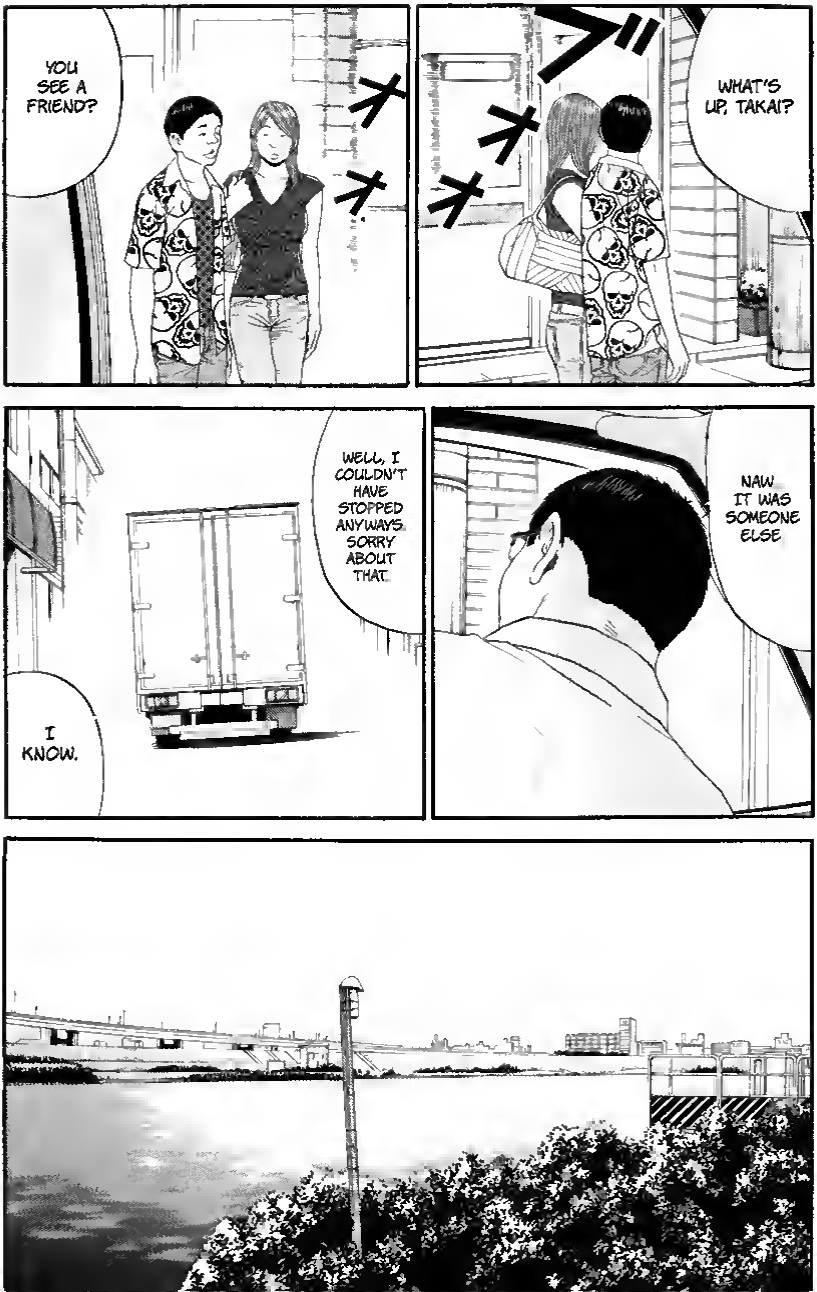

ズオオオオ

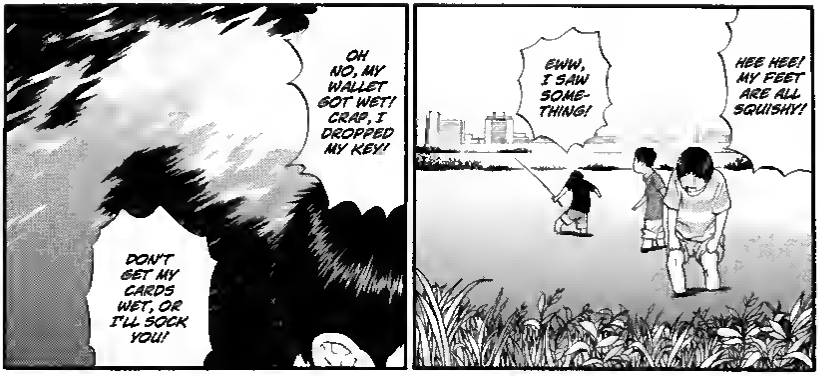
HUMMER

YEAH.
WHAAAT? YOU MEAN YOU USED TO LIVE AROUND HERE?
ブオオオオ
Truck Taiyo Shipping

TAKE A LEFT AT THE LIGHT AFTER THIS ONE
I CAN'T HANDLE CITY STREETS AT ALL, SO YOU TELL ME WHERE TO GO.
WHOA, LUCKY ME! NOW WE CAN MAKE UP THE TIME WE MISSED ON THE HIGHWAY

HMM?
...OH...


YOU SEE A FRIEND?
オオオ…
ズオオオ
WHAT'S UP, TAKA!?
NAW. IT WAS SOMEONE ELSE
WELL, I COULDN'T HAVE STOPPED ANYWAYS. SORRY ABOUT THAT.
I KNOW.


OH NO, MY WALLET GOT WET! CRAP, I DROPPED MY KEY!
DON'T GET MY CARDS WET, OR I'LL SOCK YOU!
EWW, I SAW SOME-THING!
HEE HEE! MY FEET ARE ALL SQUISHY!

aprilia

...Why I love Nagumo so much...?
I wonder...
...
...I WONDER...
Because she's kind?
Because she has big boobs?
Because she's pretty?
...At first, the limits of my joy were so endless that I couldn't understand anything.
It's all of it...
I can't see an end to the answers...

AND NOW, IT'S JUST CONSTANT PARADISE
YAYA!
AIYA-YA!
I was treated like a worm at school... but in the evening, my life was a paradise.
...I'M REALLY... SCREWED ...
...WELL, DAMN...
YES?
MOM?
THE GOLDEN ONE WITH THE BROWN STRAP.
YUSUKE! HAVE YOU SEE YOUR MOM'S WATCH?

DO YOU REALIZE...
...THAT I COULD MARRY NAGUMO?
WHAT ?!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN? WHEN?
..SOME-TIME.
THAT'S JUST YOUR PERSONAL DESIRE, ISN'T IT?
SHE MIGHT COME TO FIND OUT SHE'D RATHER NOT, DOWN THE ROAD, SO DON'T GET TOO ATTACHED TO THE IDEA. ALL RIGHT?
SO, HAVE YOU SEEN MY WATCH?
NOPE.

NAGUMO, START RUNNING.
HUH?
I WANT TO SEE YOU RUNNING AS HARD AS YOU POSSIBLY CAN, WITH YOUR FACE LIKE THIS!
I WANT TO SEE YOU AT A FULL SPRINT!
AA+
NO.
WHAT?! WHY THE HELL NOT?!
IT'LL MAKE ME TIRED, AND LOOK DUMB
OH, WHO CARES ABOUT APPEAR-ANCES?! I WANT TO SEE YOU SWEATY AND MOVING FAST!
NO!

I...I'M SORRY NO.
DO YOU REALLY WANT TO CONTINUE THIS CONVERSATION?
OKAY FINE, BUT NEXT TIME! NOT NOW!
WHY NOT?! IT'S JUST RUNNING! I'VE SEEN YOUR BUTTHOLE, YOU KNOW!
HMMMM... I SEE...
HANG ON! I'M SERIOUS, WHAT WAS THAT? WHAT DID YOU SAY ABOUT ME SLEEPING?!
WHAT?! EXCUSE ME?! DID YOU JUST SAY SOMETHING?!
IT WENT "POOOT."
WHEN YOU WERE SLEEPING TWO DAYS AGO
Please, powerful men, make our country great and tranquil!...
Yes, I see. I guess I'd better vote in the next election.
This happiness we share is predicated on peace...

That night,
I had a dream.

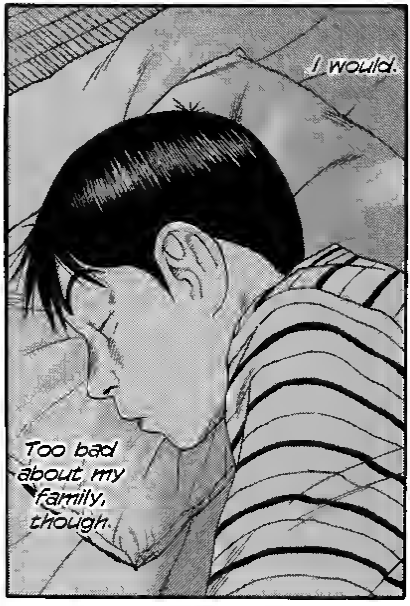
HEE HEE
HEE HEE.

I was asked a question...
...by some person I couldn't recognize...
...or whose gender I could identify.

HEH HEH HEH...
DO YOU REALLY THINK
IT'S ALL GOING TO WORK OUT IN THE END?

YOU ARE ABSO-LUTELY A WALKING MASS OF MISFOR-TUNE, YOU KNOW?
HEH HEH
I KNOW that.

YOU MIGHT MAKE HER MISER-ABLE.
I know. If it happens, we'll split up.
WILL YOU BE ABLE TO?
Yes... I can do anything if it's for her sake.


I would.
Too bad about my family, though.

WOULD YOU DIE?

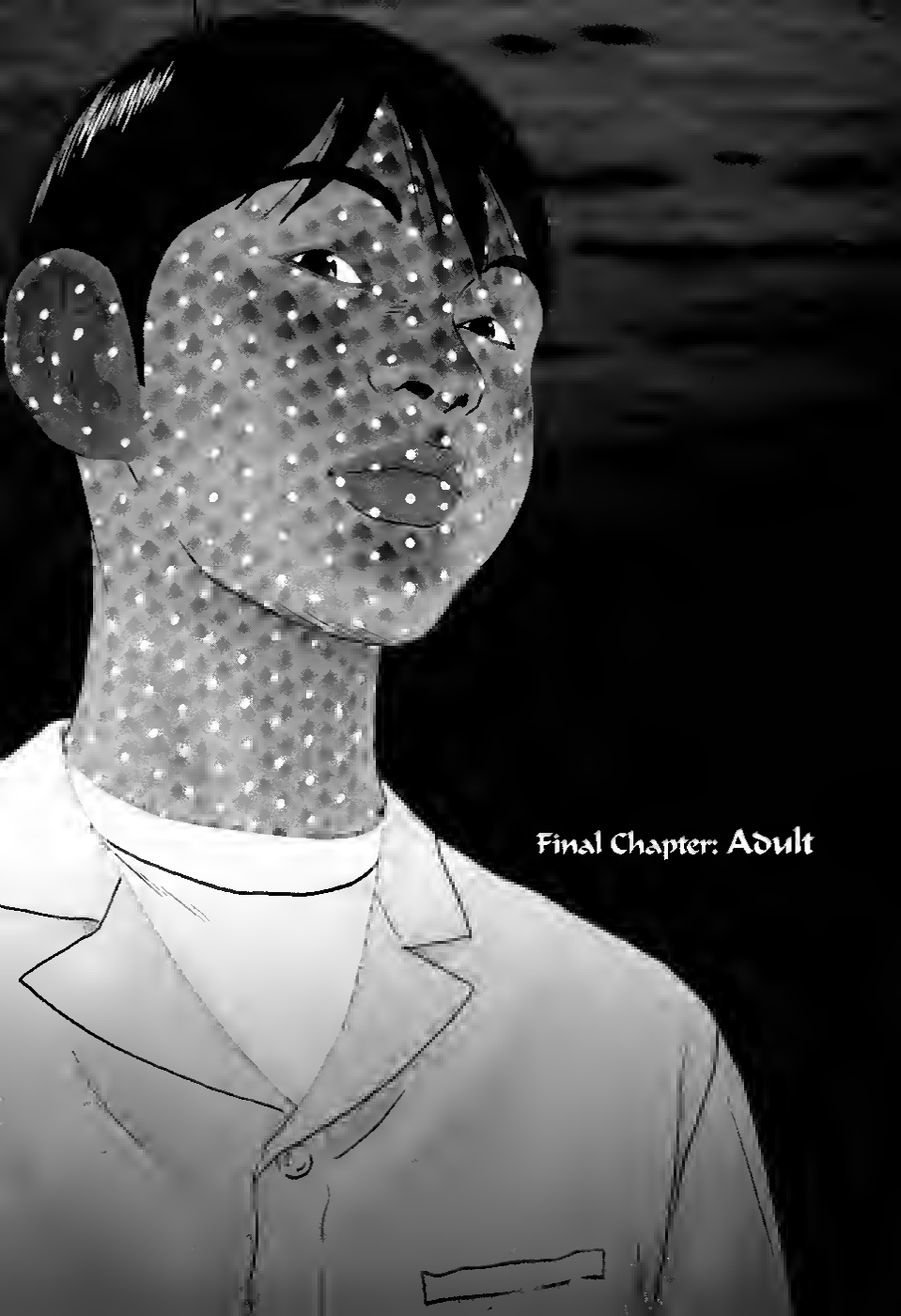
I'm not just saying this...
That's the problem.
YOU AREN'T JUST SAYING WHAT I WANT TO HEAR BECAUSE THIS IS A DREAM?

Thank you.
Really? That's good.

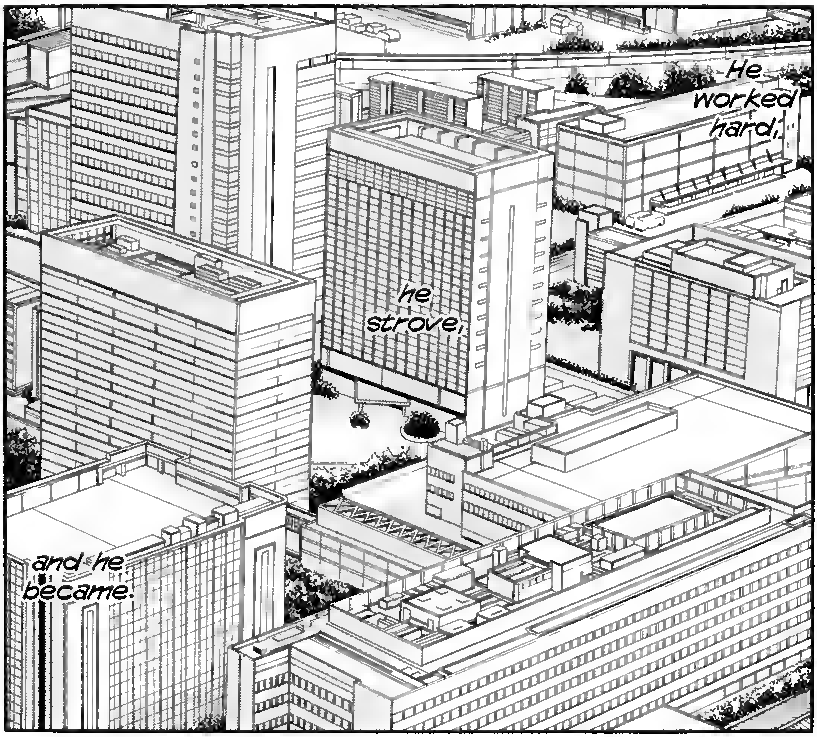
HE'S AS CHEER-FUL AS HE WAS BEFORE.
...I HEAR THAT TAKAI IS WELL THESE DAYS.

I'd better study.

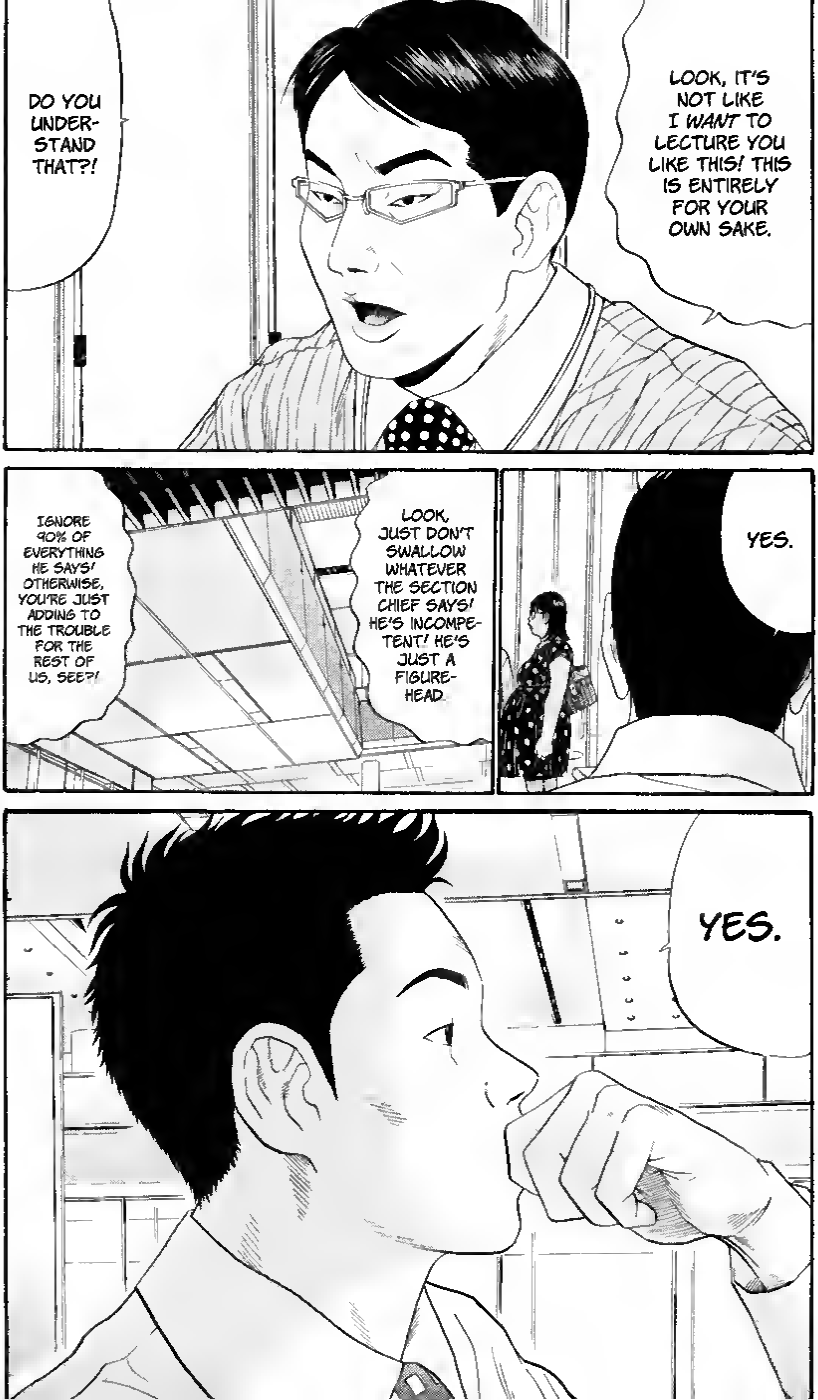
Study,
get into college,
get a job,
be an adult.
Then...


Final Chapter: Adult

Yusuke Ogino changed.
He grew stronger.
He became an adult.


He worked hard,
he strove,
and he became.

HEY, ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME?!
YOU'RE BEING NAIVE! YOU THINK YOU'RE STILL JUST THE NEW GUY AROUND HERE, DON'T YOU? WELL, I CAN TELL YOU THAT NOBODY ELSE BELIEVES THAT ANYMORE!


LOOK, IT'S NOT LIKE I WANT TO LECTURE YOU LIKE THIS! THIS IS ENTIRELY FOR YOUR OWN SAKE.
DO YOU UNDER-STAND THAT?!
LOOK, JUST DON'T SWALLOW WHATEVER THE SECTION CHIEF SAYS! HE'S INCOMPE-TENT! HE'S JUST A FIGURE-HEAD.
IGNORE 90% OF EVERYTHING HE SAYS! OTHERWISE, YOU'RE JUST ADDING TO THE TROUBLE FOR THE REST OF US, SEE?!
YES.
YES.

OGINO, DID YOU GET THE CAR BORROWED FROM OPERATIONS?

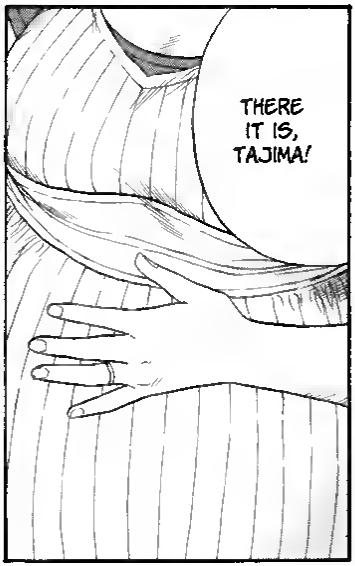
AND YOU SAID "OKAY," REMEMBER? GET IT DONE BY LUNCH.
BUT THEN HE SAID "WE NEED IT AFTER ALL." AFTER THAT!

NO.. THE MANAGER SAID EVERYTHING WAS COOL...

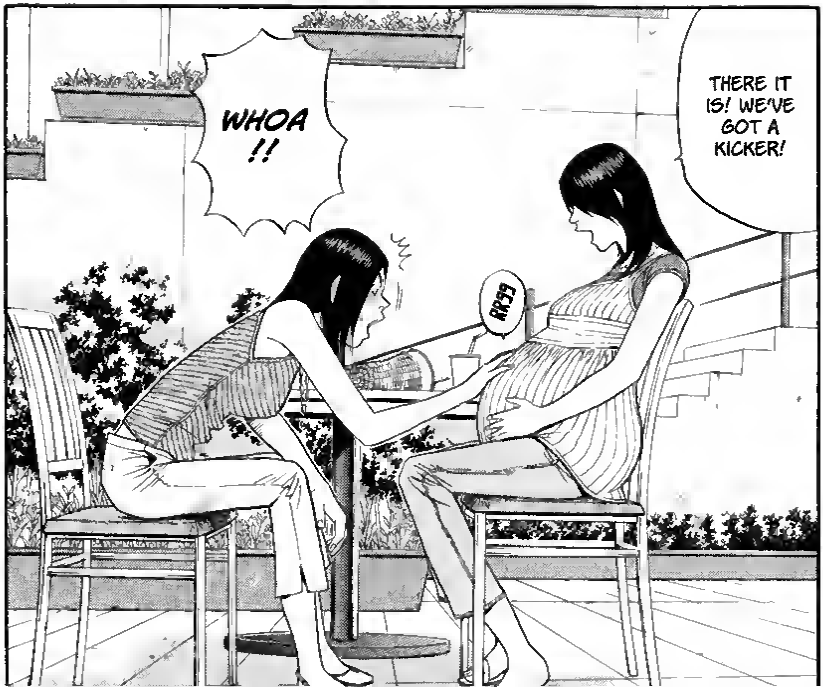
OKAY..

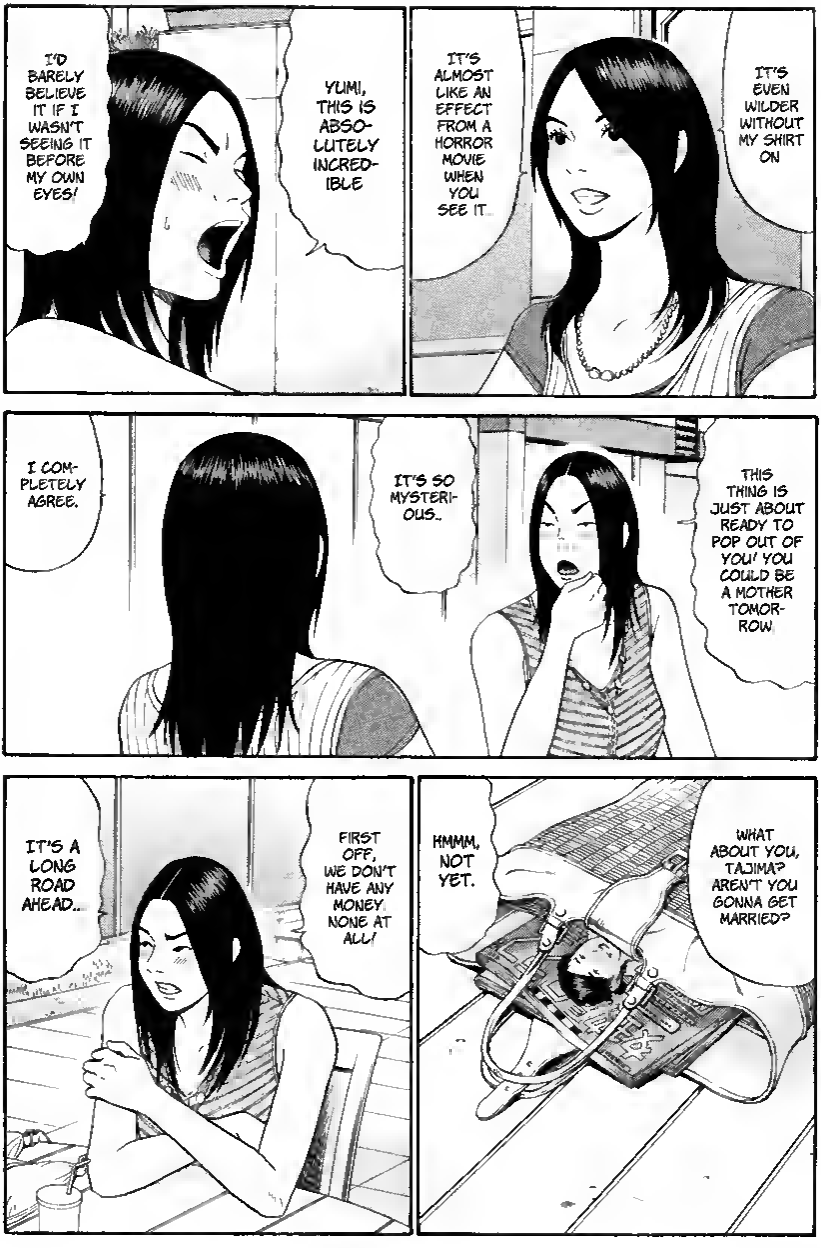
A baby is about to be born.
It's coming.

OH! WHERE?

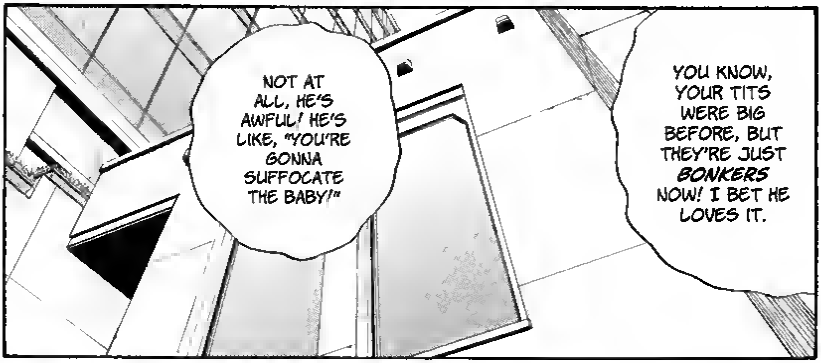

THERE IT IS, TAJIMA!

NO, NO, FURTHER UP. TOUCH UP HERE.
ARE YOU SURE? I'M A LITTLE SCARED


THERE IT IS! WE'VE GOT A KICKER!
WHOA !!
KRSS

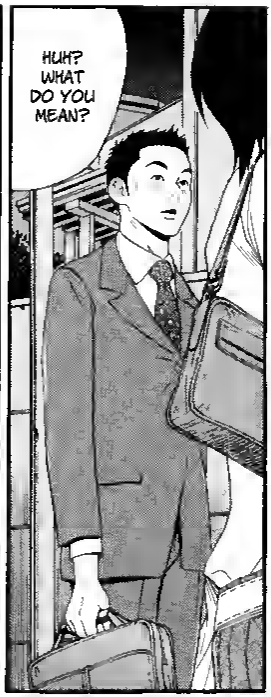

I'D BARELY BELIEVE IT IF I WASN'T SEEING IT BEFORE MY OWN EYES!
YUMI, THIS IS ABSO-LUTELY INCRED-IBLE
IT'S ALMOST LIKE AN EFFECT FROM A HORROR MOVIE WHEN YOU SEE IT.
IT'S EVEN WILDER WITHOUT MY SHIRT ON
I COM-PLETELY AGREE.
IT'S SO MYSTERI-OUS..
THIS THING IS JUST ABOUT READY TO POP OUT OF YOU! YOU COULD BE A MOTHER TOMOR-ROW.
IT'S A LONG ROAD AHEAD..
FIRST OFF, WE DON'T HAVE ANY MONEY. NONE AT ALL!
HMMM, NOT YET.
WHAT ABOUT YOU, TAJIMA? AREN'T YOU GONNA GET MARRIED?

HOW'S YOUR HUBBY DOING? WHAT'S THE PLAN? IS HE GOING TO STAND IN ATTENDANCE?
HE WAS, BUT NOW HE'S CHICKENING OUT I THINK IT'S BETTER IF HE DOESN'T.


YOU KNOW, YOUR TITS WERE BIG BEFORE, BUT THEY'RE JUST *BONKERS* NOW! I BET HE LOVES IT.
NOT AT ALL, HE'S AWFUL! HE'S LIKE, "YOU'RE GONNA SUFFOCATE THE BABY!"

WHY WERE YOU LOOKING AT THE PREGNANT LADY?
注意
30

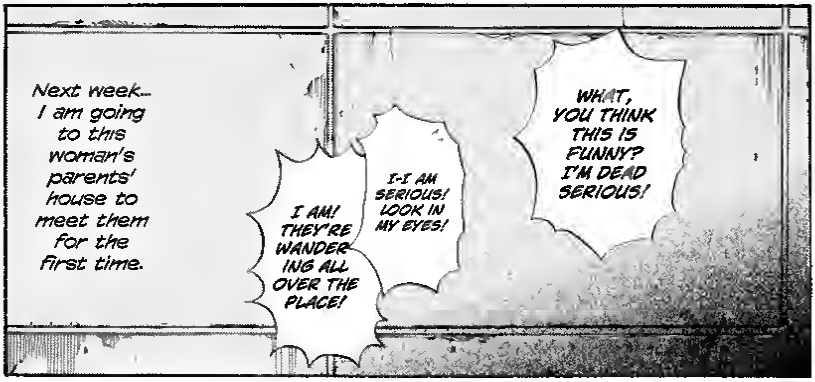
IT WAS LIKE YOU WERE PRACTICALLY LOOKING AT THE BABY INSIDE.
YOU WERE STARING HOLES INTO HER WHEN THAT IDIOT SAKAKI WAS CHATTING YOUR EAR OFF

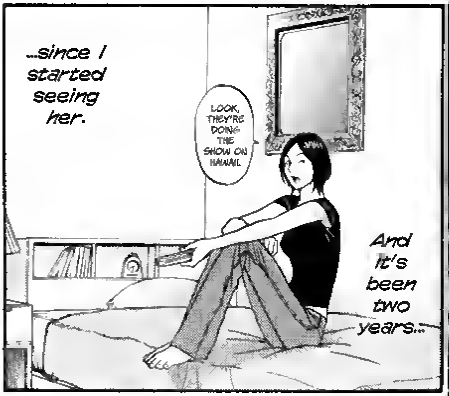

HUH? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

...
YES YOU WERE! WHY WOULD YOU LIE ABOUT THIS?
N-NO... I WASN'T STARING...
CAN I... ASK YOU A QUESTION?
YEAH.. GO AHEAD.
WHEN YOU SAID YOUR FRIEND WAS GOING TO HAVE A BABY..
WERE YOU ACTUALLY TALKING ABOUT... AN OLD GIRL-FRIEND?

OH, GOD! I WAS RIGHT!
I WAS RIGHT ABOUT SOMETHING I SHOULDN'T HAVE EVEN BEEN GUESSING!
HANG ON, NO! SORRY, YOU'RE WRONG!
ARE YOU KIDDING ME? DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE STILL IN LOVE WITH HER!
I SAW THAT WISTFUL LOOK IN YOUR EYES!
N-NO, NO! YOU'RE GETTING THE WRONG IDEA!
STOP THINKING SO FAR INTO THIS!
HMMM? OGINO?
YES?

I L-L-LOVE YOU.
OF COURSE I DO.
LET ME ASK ONE MORE TIME.. DO YOU REALLY LOVE ME?


Next week... I am going to this woman's parents' house to meet them for the first time.
I AM! THEY'RE WANDERING ALL OVER THE PLACE!
I-I AM SERIOUS! LOOK IN MY EYES!
WHAT, YOU THINK THIS IS FUNNY? I'M DEAD SERIOUS!

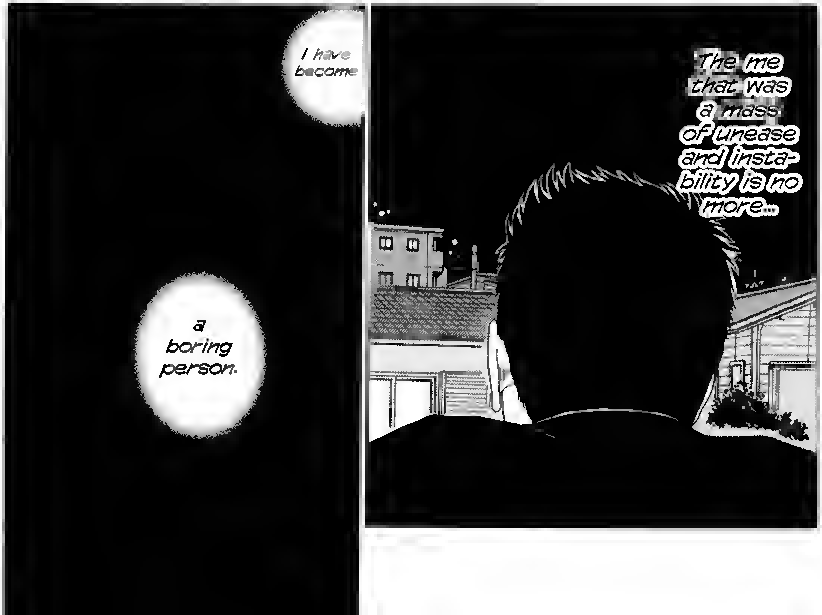

...since I started seeing her.
LOOK, THEY'RE DOING THE SHOW ON HANAMI.
And it's been two years...

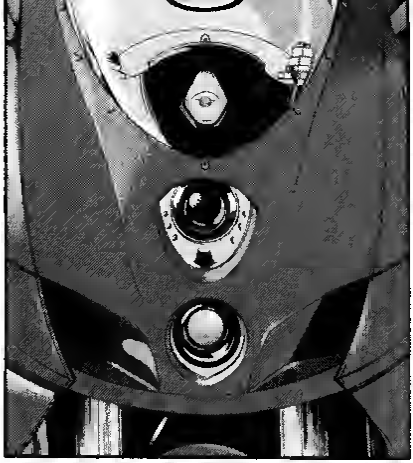
It's been four years since I split up with Nagumo.

I love her
with all of my heart.
I am in love with her...

WELL DONE, YUSUKE OGINO.
YOU TURNED OUT BETTER THAN YOU COULD HAVE EXPECTED.

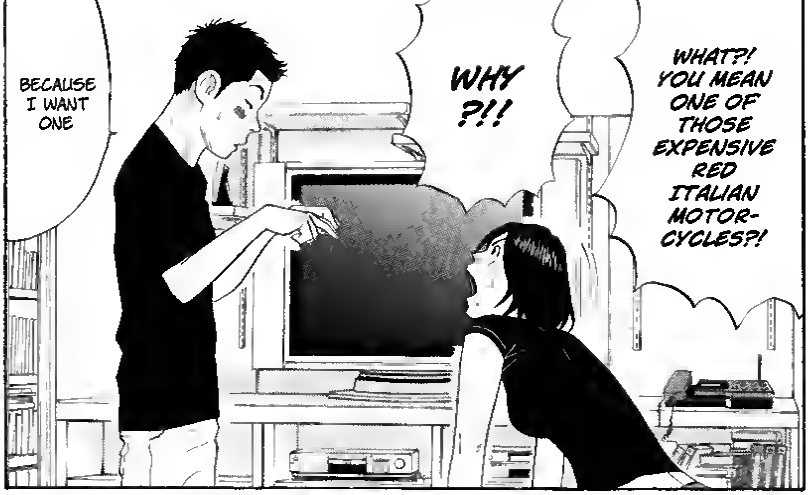
I no longer wildly distrust myself,
or fiercely question myself,
or label myself the root of all misfortune.
I turned out to be a much more successful person...
...than I ever could have imagined back then.

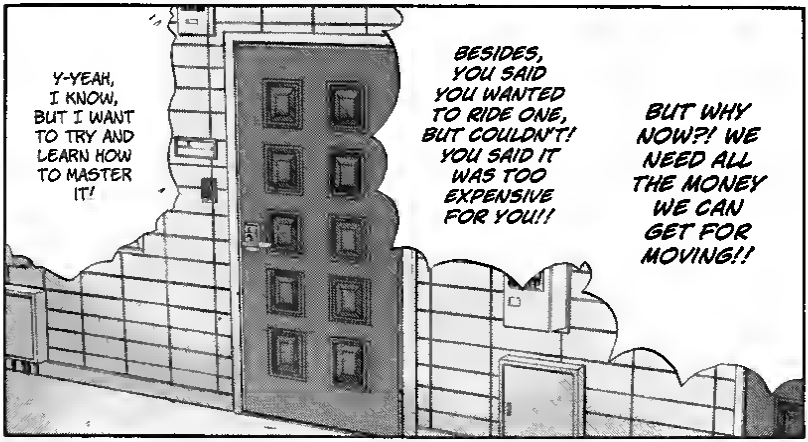

I have become
a boring person.
The me that was a mass of unease and instability is no more...



HUH?
A DUCATI.

...I THINK I'LL BUY... A DUCATI...
...TOMOR-ROW...


BECAUSE I WANT ONE
WHY ?!!
WHAT?! YOU MEAN ONE OF THOSE EXPENSIVE RED ITALIAN MOTOR-CYCLES?!


Y-YEAH, I KNOW, BUT I WANT TO TRY AND LEARN HOW TO MASTER IT!
BESIDES, YOU SAID YOU WANTED TO RIDE ONE, BUT COULDN'T! YOU SAID IT WAS TOO EXPENSIVE FOR YOU!!
BUT WHY NOW?! WE NEED ALL THE MONEY WE CAN GET FOR MOVING!!

PLEASE, YUKO! I SWEAR IT WON'T BE A PROBLEM!
DON'T WORRY, I'LL TRY TO FIND AN OLD USED MODEL FOR AS CHEAP AS IT'LL GET!

MMMMMMMM.
...
I LOVE YOU, YUKO... LET'S BE TOGETHER FOREVER.
MMMM... OKAY.

CIGUATERA

vol.6 end

not to be continued

"Ciguatera"

.....

Filmore L. Yingrobots
Barnaby A. Rbapapa
Pete N. Yxtr

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